BEAUMARCHAIS

1732 1799

RENÉ DALSÈME

Agnes H. Campbell

1932

BEAUMARCHAIS

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_T4-APT-491

De Beaumarchais

BEAUMARCHAIS

1732–1799

BY

RENÉ DALSÈME

TRANSLATED BY

HANNAFORD BENNETT

. . . "A wretchedly bad reputation" . . .
"But suppose I am better than my reputation?"
—*The Marriage of Figaro*

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK : LONDON
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
The Knickerbocker Press
1929

BEAUMARCHAIS

Copyright, 1929
by
G. P. Putnam's Sons

First American Edition

Made in the United States of America

CONTENTS

PART I

PAGE

DAWN 1

PART II

ZENITH 73

PART III

TWILIGHT 321

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
Beaumarchais	*Frontispiece*
Madame Beaumarchais	26
The Three Daughters of Louis XV . . .	30
Madame de Pompadour	36
Etienne-François, Duc de Choiseul . . .	54
King Charles III of Spain	60
Louis XV	66
Comte Joseph Alexandre Falcoz de la Blache .	78
Beaumarchais	118
Comtesse du Barry	142
Jean Jacques Rousseau	148
Earl of Rochford	170
Maria Theresa of Austria	188
Marie Antoinette	198
Jean Frederick de Maurepas	204
Chevalier D'Eon	220
John Wilkes	228
Comte de Vergennes	234

FACING PAGE

Louis XVI 242

Silas Deane 252

Benjamin Franklin 262

Voltaire 272

Marquis de Lafayette 352

Comte de Mirabeau 358

Louis XVIII 418

BEAUMARCHAIS

PART I

DAWN

CHAPTER I

"My youth—gay, mad, happy as it was!"

BEAUMARCHAIS.

IT was four o'clock in the afternoon of a beautiful spring Sunday in the year of grace 1744. Paris, bathed in sunshine, was taking the air. Citizens of the middle and working classes, more or less prosperously attired, sauntered along the approaches to the Tuileries, some arrayed in lace and others in black velvet, while the fashionable ladies gracefully fanned themselves in the shade of an early parasol.

But many citizens remained at home, and among them was the family of Caron, the watchmaker, who kept shop and lived in a small yellow-plastered house in the Rue St. Denis. The workshop of André Caron, watchmaker to the King, was on the ground floor abutting on the street, and received its light through the small square panes of a door and a low window facing his working bench. The front of the house projected to the first floor, and a large four poster bed with a shaded blue canopy could be seen through the curved windows. The living room and kitchen looked out on the yard, and the small rooms of the floor above were the children's bedrooms. Five children were still living at home, four of whom were girls: Lisette the eldest, fif-

teen years of age; Fanchon the second, twelve; Tonton the youngest, five; and Julie, in between, nine, ironically nicknamed La Bécasse,[1] and she led the family almost as pretty a dance as her more famous brother. Pierre, Pierrot, this brother—born on the 24th of January, 1732—was twelve and the only son and heir, and the watchmaker had a weakness for him though he took good care not to show it. Then there was the eldest daughter, La Grande as Marie Joseph was called, married a little while before to a young architect. Pierre simply called her Guilbert, her husband's name.

In the small backyard of the house five or six children were noisily playing, shouting and running about, rushing merrily in and out of the house, and shrieking with laughter, chased by Margot the cook whose larder they had vainly attempted to pilfer. Master Pierre answered the old woman's threats by spinning on his heel with his fingers to his nose whilst Fanchon, La Bécasse and Tonton and Jean and Toinon Datilly, two playmates from next door, yelled and clapped their hands. Each as boisterous as the other their leader was "Monsieur Pierre," a sportive youth, full of craft and impudence, with a keen roguish eye, ruffled hair and a general look of untidiness, the mischievous ringleader of the band; in short a charming rascal even now dreaming of things beyond his years.

"Oh really, Margot, has any one been stealing things? Well, we'll go and see to it. . . ."

Dressing himself up in his father's wide cape, Pierre

[1] La Bécasse, literally woodcock, is used here as a synonym for goose.

would stalk up the yard with a dignified air, tripping almost at every step over the long garment.

"Gentlemen, the Court!"

His chums and his two young sisters doffed their hats and burst out laughing as, seating himself on a post in a corner of the yard, he proceeded solemnly to act the part of Brid'oison. Once comfortably settled, the worthy judge began a burlesque reading of the imaginary documents in the indictment; then followed the examination of the accused and grotesque or appealing speeches addressed to the impassive Pierre who, as though he were Madame Pernelle, delivered judgment, inflicting at random fearsome penalties: "You, Janot, are sentenced to ten strokes on the soles of your feet for making jugged hare of Kitty, La Bécasse's cat and regular boarder. La Bécasse is ordered to pay the funeral expenses for allowing her boarder out after the curfew hour; the witnesses are fined three farthings each for failing in respect to the former judge Brid'oison, President of the St. Denis Court; and costs in the case must be paid jointly by the accused Janot Datilly, and my sister Julie Caron, my sister Julie Macaroon—no I made a mistake—never mind." The Court broke up amid the yells of the dissatisfied litigants and the indignant victims, and the vociferous shouts of the judge who must needs fight his way through his audience with his fists.

In the evenings after dinner, the young rascal would slip out of the living room where the candles were burning out one after another to the uttermost flicker.

He knew that when the last of the four was consumed it would be his bedtime. He preferred to escape by the low back door or by his father's shop door and join the young scamps whose chief amusement at that hour was to raise the neighbourhood by running yelping through the streets, or banging on the knockers to hear themselves threatened with the night watch or a sound thrashing.

The serious members of the family would spend their leisure time at home in much more intellectual fashion. They would play instrumental music and sing and make verses, each with his nose in the air and a look of abstraction, seeking inspiration from the blotches on the ceiling or the hangings on the wall. Let us make closer acquaintance with these members of an interesting family. There was André Caron, watchmaker to the King, a tall, gaunt man with a keen, frank expression; his wife, always engaged in tapestry work; Marie Louise, his second daughter, called Lisette; and Marie Joseph and her husband.

This unassuming family possessed artistic and intellectual aspirations which were inborn in the watchmaker and which his children inherited from him. Only his wife was deficient in mental ardour. She loved to hear her daughters sing Handel and Bach and watched with an amused eye their efforts to emulate their father's quest for rich rhymes, but the dear lady was of somewhat ordinary mind and preferred her needlework. Very devout herself, she carefully watched over the religious education of her only son, to whom,

however, her teaching made little appeal. In vain she harped upon the same string. Pierre, the rascal, quick and intelligent in general, and endowed with an exceptional gift for music, had no love for the catechism, and to be compelled to go early every Sunday morning to mass at St. Catherine's Church was against the grain.

The boy, father to the great man, was boisterous but not thoughtless; bubbling over with high spirits, always in a ferment, with an imagination to which he gave full rein, and he had small love for the restraints and duties of religion. At the boarding school to which his father sent him he did little work, yet his amazing facility enabled him to obtain sufficient marks to escape punishment. In the form room, he was all horseplay; in the schoolroom, he scribbled music or let his thoughts wander to the wild escapades of the Sunday before or the Sunday to come; to the impending departure of his two eldest sisters and Guilbert to Madrid; and to his own early confirmation which he looked upon as a pleasant piece of drudgery.

He spent most afternoons free from school duties at Vincennes with an old monk of the order of St. Francesco de Paula to whom his religious instruction was confided. The monk was wont to season his teaching with a succulent repast, and it was an argument highly appreciated by our stripling as leaving more definite memories than his exhortations. The monastery, too, possessed a stately old painting, *The Day of Judgment*, and Pierre often stood gazing at it for moments together:

on the one side the good or the elect, on the other the wicked or eternally doomed.

"I shall be among the elect, don't you think, father?" he asked with shining eyes.

"Yes, my son, if you are free from pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth, for these are the seven deadly sins," the old monk made answer smiling.

Pierre was confirmed in June, and after school had broken up, he spent the summer holidays in careering happily about Paris, in joyous excursions to the Bois de Bellevue or St. Cloud with his sisters. Chill October saw him back at school again; and while he was idling away his time his father in his workshop was putting his watches together, polishing the works, and wearing out his eyes.

Business was bad that winter, and in the following spring Pierre was taken away from school to enter his father's workshop. His education was costing more than it was worth.

Pierre set about learning the trade of watchmaking, but displayed no great zeal for "measuring time" as he said afterwards. An indifferent apprentice was the young imp, for his imagination kept soaring up the musical scale or among the literary lumber with which his mind had somehow become stored. His head was filled with sensuous thoughts, puerile levities, the ambitious dreams of a Perrette, the aspirations of a grown man; and these things gave him the manners of an eccentric, a mixture of childishness and gravity, so that

his father, a convert from Protestantism, at once austere and jovial, simple and earnest, calm and sensible, was at a loss and uneasy about him. To his two sisters, who had established themselves in Madrid with Guilbert, the architect, Pierre—he was then thirteen—wrote a fantastic letter in prose and verse which reveals alike the method and confusion of his mind:

"Dame Guilbert and friends,
I have received the polite letter
That you have addressed to me,
And I feel my soul moved
By so much gratitude,
That in Spain as well as in France,
I love you with all my heart,
And deem it a very great honour
To be your friend and brother:
Remember me in your prayers!

"Your letter has given me infinite pleasure and rescued me from the gloomy depression which has oppressed me for some time and was making my life a burden so that I can say with truth:

"Often I am seized with desire
To flee to the end of the world,
And pass the rest of my life
Far from the perversity of man.

"But the news that I received from you is beginning to throw a little light into my misanthropy. In cheering my mind, Lisette's easy and amusing style had insensibly changed my melancholy into a sweet languor, so that without giving up my idea of retirement, it seems

to me that a companion of another sex could not fail to spread a certain charm over my existence:

"My imagination takes flight at the thought,
My heart, too, is captured by it,
And in my castles in the air
I would have a gentle companion
Who should add, to a thousand charms,
Wit, and a lovely face,
A beautiful ivory-coloured form,
Eyes that are sure of their victory
Such as you possess, my Guilbert.
I would wish her to have the frank expression,
The slender and well made figure
That we remark in Lisette.
I would wish her, too, to have the freshness of
Fanchon
For as you know, one cannot have too much of
a good thing!

"And yet lest you reproach me with looking too much at the physical side and neglecting more solid advantages for fleeting charms I would add:

"I would wish that with so much grace
She might have the wit of La Bécasse.
A certain taste for indolence
With which Tonton is ever reproached
Would be sufficiently becoming to my Iris.
And in my retreat, free from every care,
We would pass our days in love and idleness.
Such would be our usual fare.

"But what madness it is of me to tell you of my dreams. It may be because Spain is a country where dreams come true that the thought came to me to confide my dreams to you, but dreams about the sex!

I who ought to hate everything that wears a petticoat and mob cap for the evils the sex has done me! But patience—I am now out of their claws; the best thing will be never to be caught in them again."

Such was the astonishing poetical beginning of this prototype of Cherubin possessed above all things of an irresistible longing for a restless life and an immense vanity. Discovering this letter some fifty years later among the papers of his sister Julie, not long dead, Beaumarchais apologised for the poor quality of his verse, adding in explanation: "I had a madcap girl friend who made game of my ardent youth and had just married. I wanted to commit suicide."

His impetuous nature was out of its element sitting for hours together on a stool, and his father had much ado to keep him to it. Dreaming his dreams at the working bench, he would listen idly to the varied tickings of the many clocks in the shop, swollen by the slow solemn tones of a grandfather's clock, or amuse himself with the maidservants of the neighbouring houses, abstracting a louis or two from the till for the purpose—he was even then a great ladies' man—and bring down on himself a sharp reproof from his father, who could not fail to see on his return from delivering his watches that work had made no progress. And the scapegrace would utter a defiant and impertinent answer full of the caustic sarcasm which was later to make so many enemies for him and become his favourite weapon against his detractors.

One day after a more than usually violent scene,

his father turned him out of doors, or rather pretended to banish him from the house; but certain friends, the Peignons, were informed beforehand and they received him at their place. After many entreaties from his mother and an exchange of letters between father and prodigal son, Pierre was allowed to return to the fold, but forced to enter into certain engagements. Here are his father's conditions:

"1. You must make nothing, sell nothing, cause nothing to be made, directly or indirectly, except for me alone, and you must no longer give way to the temptation of appropriating anything which belongs to me. You must have absolutely nothing but what I give you . . . you must not even sell an old watch key without accounting to me for it.

"2. You must get up in the summer at six o'clock and in winter at seven. You must work cheerfully until supper time at anything I give you to do. I mean you to employ the ability which God has given you entirely with a view of becoming famous in your profession. . . .

"3. You must not go out any more to supper, nor go out at all in the evenings; such supper-parties and amusements are too dangerous for you; but I consent to your dining with your friends on Sundays and holidays on condition that I know where you are going and that you always come back before nine. I recommend you from this day never to ask permission to break this rule, and I should advise you not to take it upon yourself to do so. . . .

"4. You must give up your miserable music altogether, and above all the company of young men. I will tolerate neither. Both have been your ruin. Nevertheless out of consideration for your weakness, I will allow you the violin and flute, but only on the express condition that you never play either until after supper on working days, and never in the daytime; and that you do not disturb our neighbours' rest nor my own.

"5. I will avoid sending you out as far as possible but in case I am obliged to do so for business reasons, remember above all things that I shall never again accept any of your poor excuses for being late, and you know beforehand how much a breach of this rule would annoy me.

"6. I shall allow you your board and eighteen francs a month which will suffice for pocket money and enable you by degrees to pay your debts."

He had learnt his lesson and became an exemplary son, never again failing in respect and affection for his father.

For the next three years, he was learning the art of watchmaking, allowing his mind to embrace all manner of things as well as his work. He grew suddenly interested in mechanics and his father, not unversed in the science, occasionally assisted him. Seized with a desire to improve his knowledge of this branch of his work, Pierre borrowed books from his father's friends, Lepaute the watchmaker in particular, and spent the best part of his nights in his attic in the Rue St. Denis burning the midnight oil over abstruse calculations which he

loved to follow up however intricate they were. He was filled with an immense ardour and displayed a dogged persistence and impetuosity in whatever he put his hand to do, which so far from weakening when he was subsequently brought up against the facts, assumed an ever increasing intensity.

During the daytime, Pierre repaired the watches behind the green-tinted shop front, seated on a stool next his father who observed with a feeling of satisfaction Pierre's growing interest in his work. He found the mechanism of timepieces extremely complicated and dreamed of simplifying it. Six months later, after a final night spent in verifying his calculations, he devised a new escapement much simpler and stronger than the old method. He submitted this to his father.

"The thing seems to me well worked out on paper, my boy," said his father. "But I can't verify your calculations; they are beyond me. As it happens, Lepaute is coming today and you must show him your work."

Lepaute, whom Caron had known for some considerable time, was then one of the magnates of the trade. As a matter of fact he did call that day and Pierre laid his idea before him, summarising briefly certain calculations, and asked, with unconcealed anxiety, whether in the eyes of the master there was any flaw in the principle. M. Lepaute's eyes gleamed with a peculiar light, and stroking his well-shaven, powdered chin he murmured: "Interesting, very interesting." He laid his shovel hat on the bench, drew forward a stool,

and invited Pierre to sit down beside him and explain his plan in detail. Pierre entered into further particulars. Lepaute rubbed his hands, and on taking leave said: "Put together a watch with your escapement. I'll come and see it before long and I may ask you to allow me to try your invention in a clock M. de Julienne has ordered from me."

Lepaute soon returned. Meantime Pierre had made the watch, which kept admirable time, while the setting and working of the new escapement were of extreme simplicity. It was a sight that seemed to fill the worthy watchmaker with joy.

But ten days later Lepaute laid before the Academy of Sciences "a new escapement for timepieces," and an article appeared in the *Mercure* of September, 1753, containing the announcement of a new escapement for clocks and watches devised by him. He had merely fitted the timepieces made in his own shop with the simple and ingenious contrivance of which Pierre had been the too confiding inventor!

"M. Lepaute recently showed His Majesty the King a new watch of his construction. Its chief merit consists in the escapement. . . . The inventor has fitted it with a dead-beat escapement set in motion by pins working alternately on a crutch whose two levers are equal and normal. . . . He has, moreover, found a new method of eliminating entirely the potance which hitherto consisted of eight pieces, by placing one of the pins in the pillar plate and the other in the ordinary way in the cock of the watch. . . . The escapement is free

from any possibility of disarrangement, interlocking or abnormal action."

A friend who had read the article and was aware of Pierre's work drew his attention to it. Pierre blazed out, and consulted his father who, notwithstanding Lepaute's influence and reputation, advised him to take the matter up in his own defence. Pierre first went to Lepaute and demanded an explanation. The astute Lepaute simply declared that his escapement had nothing in common with the one that Pierre had laid before him some time earlier though he showed no inclination to describe his own. Pierre refused to accept this fantastic explanation as satisfactory and wrote the following letter to the *Mercure:*

"I have read with the utmost astonishment your number of September, 1753, in which M. Lepaute, watchmaker to the Luxembourg, announces as his invention a new escapement for watches and clocks which he says he has had the honour of laying before the King and the Academy.

"It is important to me in the interests of truth and my own reputation, to claim this invention as my own and not to remain silent over a great breach of confidence.

"It is true that on the 23rd of last July, in the joy of my discovery, I had the weakness to entrust this escapement to M. Lepaute so that he might make use of it in a clock which M. de Julienne had ordered from him, and the works of which he assured me would not

be seen by any one, as he was fitting it with his pneumatic winding apparatus and would himself keep the key. But how could I suppose that M. Lepaute would think fit to appropriate this escapement which, as I say, I had confided to him under a pledge of secrecy?

"I do not wish to take the public unawares, and I have no intention of asking it to side with me on the mere strength of my statement alone; but I earnestly beg it not to give any credence to M. Lepaute's assertions, until the Academy has decided between us, and has determined which of us is the inventor of the new escapement. M. Lepaute seems to wish to avoid investigation; he declares that his escapement, which I have not seen, bears no resemblance to mine; but from what he says in his announcement I gather that it is entirely the same in principle; and that if the Commissioners, whom the Academy may appoint to hear our contradictory claims, find any differences, these differences can only arise from faults in construction which will help to expose the theft.

"I will not publish any of my proofs. They must first be placed before the Commissioners in all their strength, so that whatever M. Lepaute may say or write against me, I shall maintain a strict silence until the Academy has been made acquainted with the facts and delivered its verdict.

"The discerning public will be kind enough to suspend judgment until then. I hope for this favour from its sense of fairness and from the patronage which it

extends to the arts. I venture to flatter myself that you will consent to insert this letter in your next number.

"CARON JUNIOR, Watchmaker,
"Rue St. Denis, Near St. Catherine's,
"Paris, November 15th, 1753."

It was a brilliant defence, a clever puff of himself as inventor, by a young watchmaker who had left school at thirteen.

Still through the medium of the *Mercure*, Lepaute replied in a letter setting his reputation as a great business man, against the insignificance and obscurity of his young rival, and seeking to convince his public by parading a certificate signed by three Jesuits and a certain Chevalier de la Molière. He was referring to "clocks" while Pierre was referring to "watches," and it was easy to declare that Pierre's so-called disclosure was made on the 23rd of July, 1753, whereas his clock was shown to the King on the 23rd of May, 1753, and the one had no connection with the other. But his word was not to be trusted. Pierre stuck to his guns, returning to the attack with a second letter in which he insistently appealed to the Academy of Sciences. The incident was beginning to attract attention, and the Comte de St. Florentin issued a ministerial decree requesting the Academy of Sciences to decide between the two disputants.

In careful and even pompous language Pierre drew up his petition. And here is an extract from the Regis-

ters of the Royal Academy of Sciences dated February the 23rd, 1754:

"MM. Camus and de Montigny who were appointed Commissioners to investigate the dispute which had arisen between MM. Caron and Lepaute on the subject of an escapement of which both claimed to be the inventors, and the decision of which was referred to the Academy by the Comte de St. Florentin, having made their report, the Academy decided on the 16th of February that M. Caron must be regarded as the actual inventor of the new escapement for watches and that M. Lepaute only imitated this invention. . . ."

The incident, of no great importance in itself, was the beginning of Pierre's good fortune, and exercised considerable influence on the development of his life. Proud of obtaining justice for himself publicly, proud of seeing his name and his invention honourably known, he was ambitious to raise himself in the social scale. He solicited the office of watchmaker to the King, and at the same time wrote to a cousin of his, begging him to use his influence to obtain for him an associate membership of the Royal Society of London. He was granted the dignity of "watchmaker to the King." Afterwards, he was often seen at Versailles among the crowd of officials of the King's Household honoured with some useless place which it had been their ambition to obtain and which they had bought. They had little to do, but the satisfaction of meeting the great and obtaining their favours and the pride of wearing a glittering uniform seemed to many citizens the supreme

honour; and new places, each one more fantastic and useless than the other, such as "Cravat maker in ordinary to the King," "Keeper of the Greyhounds of the Chamber," were multiplied at will to satisfy this human vanity. They were above all courtiers: "Receive, take, ask—there you have the secret in three words." Thirty years later Beaumarchais revealed it in *The Marriage of Figaro.*

Pierre, with confident bearing, clad in some sort of court dress of royal blue, a sword at his side, took his watches to Court on levee days. Invariably good humoured, witty with discretion, self-possessed, he explained to the attentive King and inquisitive courtiers the mysteries of his minute watches, the superiority of his new method, and the nicety required to embody such perfect machinery in so small a compass. He wrote:

"I had the honour a few days ago of presenting Mme. de Pompadour with a watch in a ring of this new simplified construction—the smallest watch ever made. It is only four and a half lines in diameter, and two thirds of a line in thickness between the plates. To render the ring more convenient I have devised, in place of a key, a circle round the dial from which a little hook projects, and by drawing this hook with the nail about two thirds round the dial, the watch is rewound and goes for thirty hours." Orders began to pour in.

Mme. Francquet, the wife of one of the controllers of the Royal Kitchen, observed the handsome watchmaker as he strolled through the halls and galleries.

A young and elegant woman of fashion, alive to masculine beauty, she was impressed by the tall stature, the slender figure, the commanding presence of Master Pierre. The dainty Mme. Francquet would gladly have talked to him alone, but the spacious galleries in which she exhibited her pretty face were crowded with noisy and scandal-loving courtiers and she was unable to approach him. He swept by accompanied by a band of exquisites, even now jealous of his bearing and the unmistakable impression he had made on the court ladies and maids of honour; they plied him with foolish questions about his watches or asked his opinion on serious questions of the day. Completely at ease, he returned a flippant answer, often causing a laugh by the liveliness of his repartees.

One old courtier, standing aloof, looked on and listened. It was Pâris Duverney, the third of four brothers who, as bankers, played an active part in the financial affairs of their time. One day he went up to Pierre, tapped him familiarly on the shoulder, and introducing himself said, smiling:

"I like you, young man. You scarcely know me but I know all about you. I followed your dispute with Lepaute last year with interest, and I admire you. I admire you because I, too, had a hard struggle to begin with, and rose gradually by my own efforts to the position I have now held for thirty-five years. I was the son of a small innkeeper in the South; and my three brothers and I have always been partners. Starting with nothing, we opened a banking business which was

a success, and since then we have had a hand in every important undertaking. In favour at Court, I have succeeded in continuing that success, and the King appreciates our services. I admire plucky young men like yourself not afraid to launch out in life. Your first stroke was a master stroke both as regards your invention and your victory over Lepaute. You have made a start, a good start. You must persevere and never allow yourself to be discouraged. If ever you do find yourself in difficulties come to me, and I will help you out of them."

The old man's emphatic words did not fall on deaf ears. Unexpectedly the craftsman saw himself standing on the threshold of the upper class. One day, Madame Francquet, who knew Pâris Duverney well, asked him the name of the dashing young watchmaker whose short Court coat of royal blue and handsome figure had so greatly attracted her.

"I think you know the young man who has just passed us," she said, pointing with her fan to Pierre as he walked away, after bowing to the banker seated on a bench. "Who is he?"

"Upon my word, you are very inquisitive. Sit down here and I will tell you what you want to know," Duverney made answer, and drawing out his snuff box, took a pinch and proceeded to satisfy her curiosity.

Armed with the precious information thus vouchsafed, the fair Mme. Francquet lost no time in dropping her watch. Next day her carriage drove down the Rue St. Denis. She found Master Pierre in shirt sleeves at

work beside his father putting together and polishing up his watches. He sprang from his stool and made a sweeping bow to the smiling visitor. Then she explained who she was and they fell into conversation without taking their eyes off each other. She left her watch and he persuaded her to allow him to bring it to her at Versailles. And with a last smile the engaging Mme. Francquet entered her carriage assisted by Pierre while his father, standing on the doorstep shading his worn-out eyes with his hand, looked on admiringly. Pierre watched the carriage until it was lost to sight in the yellow haze of the setting sun.

"Well, my boy, I congratulate you," said the old man as he went indoors. "You have very charming acquaintances."

"But I don't know her."

"If that's your only objection, I don't suppose it will take long, eh?"

"But she is married."

"I know, but that's her husband's lookout. What do you expect? Why she was staring at you like a frivolous little thing madly in love with you unless I'm very much mistaken. . . ."

Mme. Francquet lost no time. It was she who set the future Beaumarchais fairly afloat. Himself endowed by nature with untiring energy, an adroit and supple mind, inordinate ambition, and some conceit, Mme. Francquet's task was considerably facilitated. Her chief merit consisted in detecting these qualities in him and guiding him towards the right path.

Some days later, Pierre rode over to the Courtyard of the Palace on his hired hack. He was warmly welcomed in the elegant drawing room of the Francquets' apartments by Mme. Francquet who made him talk about his past and his studies, and revealed her admiring surprise at the extent and diversity of our artist-watchmaker's attainments. He had read and read widely; Rabelais, Lesage, Voltaire, Montaigne, Marot, La Fontaine, Pascal, Molière, Regnier, were at his finger ends.

M. Francquet, a man of sixty and infirm, complained of his gout and rheumatism, and bewailed the many difficulties with which he was beset in the discharge of his duties by his ill-health. Mme. Francquet toyed with her fan, and kept her eyes fixed on Pierre with an interest she gradually ceased to conceal while he listened absently to the old man and gazed at her. They were beginning to understand each other, and she would do her utmost to attract him, to raise him nearer to her. It was arranged that Pierre should come again. No sooner said than done!

She set her wits to work after sounding Pierre, now become an intimate friend, to persuade her old greybeard of a husband that he could do no better, considering his infirmities, than make over his office to the young watchmaker. Before long the bargain was struck. Old M. Caron guaranteed to pay M. Francquet a life annuity which Pierre was to provide.

CHAPTER II

PIERRE, now in the service of the Court, was formally invested in his new functions by royal brevet on the 9th of November, 1755, and took up his quarters with the Francquets whose guest he became. M. Francquet, while looking out for a new home, instructed him, meantime, in the duties he would henceforward have to perform.

Less than two months later, on the 4th of January, 1756, M. Francquet was found dead from apoplexy in the easy chair in which, since his resignation, he had spent the best part of the day. Pierre returned for the time being to the Rue St. Denis. He was often at Versailles, and did not lose sight of Mme. Francquet, weighed down more by the cares of a complicated heritage than by deep grief. He assisted her with advice, even taking some of her business upon himself, and his correspondence with her shows that he was occasionally compelled to have recourse to contrivances anything but creditable—change of name and black-mail—to establish her rights. With the aid of Bardin, a wary and astute lawyer, he succeeded in his efforts. After six months of manœuvring Mme. Francquet's affairs were settled, and they were over head and ears

in love with each other. And in November, 1756, he married the young widow, six years his senior, some little time after the marriage of his sister Fanchon to Lépine the famous watchmaker.

The young married couple settled down in the Francquets' former apartments and now we behold Pierre at work. It was almost a sinecure, this work—three months occupation during the year. We may judge something of its nature from a description in *L'État de la France* for 1749:

"Under the direction of the controller in ordinary of the Royal Kitchen are sixteen controllers of the pantry who are employed by the quarter, four each quarter. The clerk-controllers of the pantry keep the ordinary and extraordinary books of the expenses of the King's household and have a voice and seat in the bureau. . . . They serve at the King's table, each wearing a sword, and place the dishes on the table with their own hands. . . . They have control over the seven pantries of the Palace. . . . They take their meals at the house steward's table or at the chief house steward's table. One of those who wait on the King is also entitled to take his meals at the almoners' table."

Beaumarchais struck up an acquaintance with some of the court officials, particularly M. Lopes, house steward to the King. He made friends, too, with Lourdet de Santerre, a witty author; he often met Jean Datilly, now become Jean d'Atilly, an officer in the King's Guards; and he conceived a respect and liking for the old banker Pâris Duverney.

MADAME BEAUMARCHAIS

From a miniature

Mme. Francquet-Beaumarchais still retained something of the bloom of youth, and her fair fluffy hair and complexion harmonised well with Pierre's tall and elegant figure. She had a satisfactory dowry. Pierre was in comfortable circumstances. He kept a carriage and man servant and often went to the theatre. His wife played the harp and he who always had a passion for music took up his flute and violin again. He studied the harp and soon became a skilful performer; and he invented a new and more practical arrangement of the pedals which is in use even to this day. With his friends he organized little concerts at his own house. And he signed his letters "Caron de Beaumarchais." The high-sounding name, Beaumarchais, appears to have been derived from a small property belonging to his wife, but where the fief was situated has never been known, though several small estates bear this name.

At last he was a gentleman. He adored his wife and was happy in his marriage, but alas, not for long. After a week's illness Mme. Beaumarchais was carried away by typhoid fever on the night of the 29th of September, 1757. Greatly affected by his untimely loss he shunned Versailles, a cheerless place in winter, and lived for a while with some friends in the Rue de Broque in Paris.

His wife's family, with whom he had hitherto lived on good terms, made a claim on her property, and the litigation was to last for some thirty years. So little had Beaumarchais expected his wife's death that he had not taken the precaution to "deposit" the contract of marriage, and in spite of the advice of his lawyer,

Bardin, he returned the greater part of his wife's estates to her family and her first husband's relatives in accordance with the law. Beaumarchais was left almost penniless.

He resumed his duties in Versailles in January, 1758. He saw once more his apartment as he left it the year before—his harp lay wrapped in its cover. With tears in his eyes he took it out, sat down and struck a few chords. What delicious music in the padded silence of the little drawing room still kept in semi-darkness by its closed curtains! . . .

Beaumarchais was now Controller of the King's Household in the Bureau Dauphin. To a correspondent who had written to him in his old name, now entirely abandoned, he said: "Don't write to me again under the name of Caron. Your letter travelled all over Versailles before reaching me."

The King continued to show his interest in him and was very friendly and took a delight in his conversation. Learning of his accomplishments with the harp and other instruments he invited him to teach his daughters, the Princesses, who cared little for society, were devoted to music, and led a secluded life far removed from their father's circle of debauchery. And now, behold Beaumarchais promoted to the rank of music master to the Princesses!

The young Princesses were somewhat capricious and to please them he had to learn every instrument. And he composed nearly all their music. When Princess Victoire had had enough of the harp she would ask for

the tambourine, and when Princess Adelaide was tired of the harpsichord she would call for the guitar. Naturally enough they ordered poor Beaumarchais to purchase these things for them and they repaid him when they happened to think of it.

Louis XV was often present at these music lessons, and looked on with an amused interest, particularly to see his daughters happy, for he was a kindly, good-natured man. Concerts were organised at which the King and the Princesses and a few select friends were present. Beaumarchais of course took a prominent part in them. The courtiers were envious:

"Why, here's this little nobody of a watchmaker, just left his shop, sneaking into Court, getting speedy promotion, winning the favour of the King and the Princesses. Here he is admitted to select gatherings and cutting a figure so that even the King, they say, one day gave up his arm chair to him when he was tired and was left standing!" To be a man of merit was the unforgivable sin in their eyes, and they took care to make the offender pay dearly for it. It was so easy to ruin a man in the eyes of Kings! Insult and slander began to assail him. Oh, he will remember it when the time comes to paint the character of Basil!

Scarcely a day passed without some act of malice or ill-will. Fortunately Beaumarchais was a man who could defend himself, and even get the better of his enemies as he had already proved. A whole series of more or less violent and odious attacks followed one upon another.

One day in one of the galleries Beaumarchais, in great request as usual, was talking to a number of ladies when he was interrupted by a young courtier accompanied by an eager, whispering, nudging band of bedecked and perfumed sprigs of the nobility. Their leader had the reputation of a man of wit:

"M. Caron . . . de Beaumarchais, may I interrupt you for a moment? My watch is out of order and as I know you understand such matters, I should be grateful if you would have a look at it and tell me if it is serious," said the young Adonis, drawing a handsome gold watch from his fob and offering it to Pierre, who took a step back.

"I don't think I can, monsieur," he returned. "Since I gave up the fine art of watchmaking I have become very clumsy."

"Indeed, M. Caron . . . de Beaumarchais, I am sure your merits are equal to your modesty. Everyone about here says as much. Do have the goodness, I beg, to examine my watch."

"Very well, monsieur, as you insist, but I must ask you to believe that I am quite out of practice."

Taking the watch which the young fop offered him, he examined it, turned it over, admired it, opened it and went over to a window the better to look at the works, put the watch on a level with his eyes, and dropped it, exclaiming with a comical gesture of despair:

"I warned you, monsieur, of my extreme clumsiness. Forgive me . . ." and turning to the delighted court ladies went on: "We were saying, Mesdames . . ."

SOPHIE
From the painting by Nattier at Versailles

VICTORIA
From the lithograph by Delpech

MARIE ADELAIDE
From the painting by Nattier at Versailles

The laugh was on his side and the rash young courtier, picking up the ruins of his watch, retired amid the jeers of his friends.

On another occasion the Princesses were presented with a delicately hand-painted fan, such as were then in fashion, depicting one of their little weekly concerts and the select company which regularly took part in them except Beaumarchais, their life and soul. The Princesses themselves observed the insult. They showed him the fan but he merely smiled and they told him they would not accept a present which deliberately omitted to include their music master. At Court, however, the incident was misrepresented and gossip ascribed to him a bitterness of language which he had not used.

Another time it was hinted to the Princesses, who were of a religious turn of mind, that Beaumarchais was not on speaking terms with his father—his mother had been dead some time—and they received him that day very coolly. He asked one of the maids of honour the reason and she told him. He hastened to Paris, brought his father to Versailles, and next day under the pretext of showing him the Palace, took him everywhere over the grounds, lakes and galleries, making sure that the Princesses should repeatedly see them together. During the evening he betook himself to their apartments to pay his respects, leaving his father in the antechamber and asking him to wait.

"With whom have you been walking about all day?" asked Princess Adelaide coldly.

"My father, madame," he returned.

Explanations naturally followed. Beaumarchais introduced his father who straightway began to sing his son's praises.

Beaumarchais was always able to get out of ignominies of this sort with skill and address. But sometimes such incidents had more serious consequences. A young courtier openly insulted him, referring to him as a wretched schemer. It was a challenge which he could not ignore. Beaumarchais and the Chevalier de C—— (history has suppressed his name) mounted their horses, wearing their swords, and rode in silence to Bellevue through the Pavé des Gardes. They rode as far as the terrace of the Château de Meudon, dismounted from their blown horses, took off their coats, and crossed swords in a piece of waste land next the main wall of the château terrace.

Beaumarchais was a novice with the sword while his opponent was an expert blade. Nevertheless, at the first onslaught Beaumarchais plunged his sword into the breast of the Chevalier, who fell mortally wounded. Distraught with anxiety Beaumarchais went to the assistance of the dying man.

"I have only got what I deserved," he said. "I challenged you to please persons for whom I have no esteem. Save yourself, M. de Beaumarchais. You are lost if it becomes known that you have taken my life."

Beaumarchais rode to the village of Meudon, sent a doctor to the place where the wounded man lay,

requesting him to have him taken to a hospital in Paris, and then made his escape. A few days later the Chevalier died without attempting to denounce his adversary; and Beaumarchais always looked back on this duel with bitter regret.

About the same time he fought another duel much less tragic in consequences. Among his numerous acquaintances was a courtesan who wished to sell her jewels. These included some valuable diamonds, and M. de Meslé, Marquis de Faily, offered to buy them for another courtesan. Beaumarchais knew the Marquis and stood guarantee for him in the sale. The Marquis de Faily, not over scrupulous, contrived to get possession of the jewels before the bargain was completed and hastened to resell them for a mere song. When Beaumarchais learned that contrary to the agreement no payment had been made and no promissory note signed, he wrote the Marquis a sharp letter pointing out the dishonesty of the transaction both to himself and the courtesan.

The Marquis made no reply to the letter and one evening some time later Beaumarchais met him in the theatre. High words passed in the foyer and Beaumarchais challenged him to a duel on the spot. An out and out coward, the Marquis observed that he was only wearing his dress sword.

"So am I," rejoined Beaumarchais. "Let's leave this place at once or I'll drag you out by the scruff of the neck."

They left the theatre and in the light of a street

lamp, near the fountain, set to work with such good purpose that Beaumarchais with his toy sword grazed the Marquis who nevertheless exclaimed in a trembling voice:

"If I had my regular sword with me the result would have been very different."

"Don't let that trouble you. I will be here at eleven o'clock and wait for you," said Beaumarchais, sarcastically turning on his heel.

He went off to the courtesan's, supped in merry company, and told the story of his contest. A friend lent him a sword and before the appointed hour he was looking for the Marquis who had returned home.

"Here the dear Marquis lay between the sheets, and he sent me word that he was suffering from a colic but would see me next day," he told his friends some days later. "He did in fact come but only to splutter an apology which I compelled him to repeat before witnesses, and he was only too glad to do so."

The damsel whose diamonds were the cause of the trouble was one of a number of similar young women with whom, since Mme. Francquet-Beaumarchais's death, he had liaisons of the lighter order and among them were Mme. de Burmane, Mlle. Lacroix and Mlle. Lacour of the Théâtre de l'Opéra.

A week later another incident arose. A certain M. de Laumur gave a ball at Versailles to which Beaumarchais was invited. M. de Sablières, a member of the nobility whom he scarcely knew by sight, wishing to play whist, borrowed thirty-five louis from him,

which he forked out of his own pocket. Three weeks passed and he wrote to M. de Sablières reminding him of the debt. He was told that he would receive the money next day. Three more weeks elapsed without any result. Beaumarchais wrote a second time but the letter was ignored. He wrote a third letter a little less restrained than his former letters but still in good form considering the noble de Sablières's assurance and lack of courtesy. He reminded him of the debt and informed him that unless it were paid within three days he would have an execution put in. Here is the reply of the man of high birth to the watchmaker's son:

"Monsieur:

"I believe that I am unfortunate enough to owe you thirty-five louis. I do not know how this can dishonour me when I have the desire to repay them. My way of thinking, monsieur, is known, and when I am no longer your debtor I shall make myself known to you in terms very different from that which you employ. I ask you to appoint a rendezvous for Saturday morning so that I may repay you the thirty-five louis, and thank you for the polite words that you have been kind enough to put into your letter. I shall endeavour to reply to them the best way I can, and I flatter myself that between now and then you will be good enough to form a less unfavourable opinion of me. Be assured that those twice twenty-four hours will seem very long to me. As to the respectable third person with whom you threaten me, I respect him, but I pay the least possible

attention to threats, and I think even less of moderation. On Saturday you shall have your thirty-five louis. I give you my word for it. I do not know if in my turn I shall be sufficiently fortunate to answer for my own moderation. Until I have paid you all I owe you, I am, monsieur, as you may wish it, your very humble, etc. . . .

"SABLIÈRES."[1]

Alarmed at the ambiguity of the letter and its seemingly bellicose intentions, Beaumarchais wrote once more to de Sablières assuring him that his purpose was entirely pacific and would remain so. He knew, after his recent duel, that he owed his immunity from anxiety to the good graces of the Princesses and the indulgence of the King and wished only to keep the peace. He added a postscript to his letter:

"P.S. I keep a copy of this letter as well as the first one in order that the purity of my intentions may help to justify me in case of misfortune; but I hope to convince you on Saturday that so far from seeking quarrels no one at the present moment should make more efforts than myself to avoid them. I cannot explain myself in writing. 31st March, 1763."

Sablières, now informed of the precise meaning of his letters, hastened to send the thirty-five louis by his valet.

But Beaumarchais, too, had influential friends. He used often to lunch at Etioles with M. le Normand, once Mme. de Pompadour's husband, a worthy man with no lack of intelligence. Le Normand gathered

[1] No attempt has been made to reproduce the peculiar orthography of this letter.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

From the painting by Boucher in the Wallace Collection

together a select company whose chief enjoyment lay in musical entertainments and Beaumarchais was invariably called upon to take part in them. Pâris Duverney, too, was often M. le Normand's guest. At the beginning of 1760 he was in anything but cheerful mood. Some ten years earlier Mme. de Pompadour had urged him to found a school for the training of young officers. He had taken up the idea with enthusiasm for great undertakings always appealed to him, and though Beaumarchais did not, perhaps, wholly acquire his taste for speculation from Duverney, the banker's influence undoubtedly fed the flame of his own inclinations in that sphere.

The École Militaire was built and even began its work under the direction of M. de Mézieu, one of Duverney's nephews, a military expert. But in spite of unceasing effort and every appeal, the banker failed to obtain official recognition of his public spirit. Mme. de Pompadour no longer possessed much influence, and Louis XV had lost his interest in her as well as in the École Militaire. Disheartened, Pâris Duverney confided his disappointment to Le Normand and Beaumarchais:

"But, my dear Beaumarchais, you whose shares are booming at Court and whose manners are so charming and persuasive, could you not prevail on his Majesty to pay the official visit I have striven in vain to secure? Say a word to the Princesses and ask them to speak to the King if you will."

Of course Beaumarchais agreed to make the attempt.

He represented to the Princesses, in an interval between their music, his old friend's position, and gained his cause. As an inducement to their august father, the four Princesses decided to pay a visit to the École Militaire with Beaumarchais. They took him along with them in their carriage. Pâris Duverney, greatly excited, did the honours of the school, inviting them to admire the wonders of its substantial architecture and disposition. They were all delighted with their promenade, and a week later, on the 18th August, 1760, Louis XV himself inspected the school. The visit was a complete success, and Pâris Duverney could not restrain his joy. He told Beaumarchais that he looked upon him as a son and would make his fortune. He began by interesting him, as formerly he had interested and enriched Voltaire, by giving him a share in army contracts.

Clever in meeting difficulties and always ready to push his own fortunes, Beaumarchais borrowed money from Duverney with a view to purchase the office of Grand Master of Woods and Forests rendered vacant by death. But the Corporation of Grand Masters prided themselves on their aristocratic exclusiveness, and when occasion offered had made it clear to the authorities that they would not accept an upstart within their ranks. Beaumarchais was forewarned, and in his endeavour to make more certain of obtaining the office, asked his father to retire from business, since his connection with the handicrafts might prevent him from attaining his object. Thus old M. Caron gave

up watchmaking. He was a widower and his children were no longer dependent upon him—Pierre kept the entire family—and he could retire by transferring his customers to his son-in-law, Fanchon's husband.

Beaumarchais failed, however, to obtain the post though the Princesses supported him and spoke to the King; and, moreover, the Controller General and Duverney bestirred themselves on his behalf. A weak minister, fearing to give offence to the Grand Masters, withheld his assent, and Louis XV, caring little either way, let things be. Beaumarchais wrote a letter to the Minister:

"Neither my inclinations nor my position nor my principles allow me to play the infamous part of informer, still less to seek to villify persons whose colleague I am desirous of becoming; but I think without offending good taste, I may resist my adversaries by turning on them the weapon with which they claim to crush me.

"The Grand Masters have never allowed their reports to be made public, which is not fair fighting, and shows that they are afraid I may answer them effectively; but I am told their objection to me is that my father was an artist, and that however celebrated a man may be in his art, such a position is incompatible with the honours attaching to the Grand Mastership.

"My reply will be to pass in review the family and previous position of some of the Grand Masters, about whom I have been furnished with very accurate reports.

"1. The name of M. d'Arbonnes, Grand Master of

Orleans, and one of my warmest opponents, is Hervé, and he is the son of Hervé the hairdresser. I can mention ten living persons to whom this Hervé has sold wigs and placed them on their heads. These gentlemen answer that Hervé was a dealer in hair. What a fine distinction! It is ridiculous from a legal point of view and false in point of fact; for no one can sell hair in Paris without being considered a hairdresser, or otherwise he must sell it surreptitiously; but he was a hairdresser. However, Hervé d'Arbonnes was received as Grand Master *without opposition* although during his youth he had perhaps shared his father's failing for the same profession.

"2. The name of M. de Marizy, appointed Grand Master of Burgundy five or six years ago, is Legrand, and he is the son of Legrand the *wool-comber* in the Faubourg St. Marceau who afterwards built a little shop for the sale of blankets, near the market of St. Laurent, where he made some money. His son married the daughter of Lafontaine, a saddler, took the name of de Marizy and was received as Grand Master *without opposition.*

"3. M. Tellès, Grand Master of Châlons, is the son of a Jew, named Tellès Dacosta, who was originally a second hand jeweller, and who afterwards made his fortune through MM. Pâris; he was received *without opposition* and subsequently excluded, as I am told, from the assemblies because he was accused of resuming his father's trade, but of this I know nothing.

"4. M. Duvaucel, Grand Master of Paris, is the

son of Duvaucel, who was the son of a button-maker; he was afterwards shopman at his brother's in La Petite Rue aux Fers, then a partner in his brother's business, and finally 'master of the shop.' M. Duvaucel met with *no obstacle* to his appointment."

Such was the spirit of the age, and Sablières's letter and this little essay serve to emphasise it.

Beaumarchais soon got over his rebuff. A mansion, nearly new, in the Rue de Condé in Paris, was for sale. He bought it and settled down in it with his servants. His father and his youngest sister Tonton, to whom he had given a brilliant education, came to live with him. Tonton was twenty-two years old and became the lady of the house. They remained in it for the next eleven years.

Meantime Beaumarchais obtained by royal brevet the office of Councillor Secretary to the King, a high-sounding title without emolument, and a necessary step in his campaign for the post of Grand Master. He bought it on the 9th of December, 1761, from Denis Janot de Miron, whose son, a young man of talent, later became a famous lawyer. Beaumarchais also bought—a humorous stroke of Fate!—the office of Lieutenant General of the Chase of the Tribunal and Bailiwick of the Warren of the Louvre. Thus he now possessed judicial powers!

His duty was to pronounce sentence in offences against the game laws—he who subsequently was to be engaged in continuous litigation and to create the character of Brid'oison! It was a much more aristo-

cratic though less lucrative post than the one that had been refused him. He had two Comtes as his lieutenants and only the Duc de la Vallière as his superior officer. He himself afterwards described his own duties:

> Here in the Louvre I sit in state
> On warrens to adjudicate;
> Through tedious mornings occupied,
> As stern as Minos, I decide
> The doom of pallid rabbits and the pain
> Reserved for wretched poachers in the plain.

CHAPTER III

BEAUMARCHAIS was engaged for three years in a somewhat curious love affair among others. At the end of 1761 an old lady friend of the family came to see him:

"My dear Pierre, I want your advice and possibly even your assistance, since you are in favour at Court. I have a niece whom you have doubtless seen at my house. She is now sixteen. She is the daughter of one of my brothers who went out to the West Indies some fifteen years ago and has just died. His solicitor has written and given me details of his property. It seems that it is all heavily mortgaged and managed by my late brother's trustees, whose main idea is to look after themselves. In short, I don't know what to do. Would it be better to sell it all and have done with it or continue to develop the property? I am very puzzled. You have many connections—do you know anyone in Santo Domingo, or going out there, who could judge for himself on the spot what is the best thing to be done?"

"I remember your niece vaguely," said Beaumarchais. "There is M. de Clugny, Governor of Santo Domingo, but he went out a year ago and we have

exchanged no letters since. However, the Princesses know him well; and their intervention would have greater weight than mine. I will speak to them about it."

The Princesses, always ready to help in a good cause, entered into communication with M. de Clugny, and invited Beaumarchais to bring the young girl to Versailles one day. He was nothing loth, and one morning called for her in his carriage at her aunt's residence.

Mlle. Pauline le Breton was a very pretty girl. Never indifferent to feminine beauty, Beaumarchais chatted with her and found her as lively as she was beautiful, and he soon conceived an affectionate liking for her. He often met her at her aunt's house and she frequently came to the Rue de Condé, amusing them all by her delightful prattle.

Beaumarchais busied himself actively over Mlle. le Breton's business affairs, and soon she fell deeply in love with him whom she addressed as "My dear friend." They wrote to one another; met with increasing frequency; exchanged soft nothings, vows, and by the summer of 1763 Beaumarchais had imperceptibly been led by Pauline's natural woman's coquetry to meditate a union which would have settled all his "niece's" business. He seriously thought of selling his appointments in France and settling down in Santo Domingo with his Pauline. He went so far as to tell his sister Julie of his intention.

Meantime he sent eight thousand francs to Santo Domingo requesting M. de Clugny to utilise the money

in reorganising Mlle. le Breton's property and placing it on a proper footing so that it might eventually bring in a good income. Then to watch his interests he sent out a cousin of his, Pichon de Villeneuve, who happened to be in low water but was a good fellow and devoted to him.

About the same time—the end of 1763—he was approached by the directors of an important French shipowning company in which Duverney had considerable interests, to take over the negotiations with the Spanish Court, under the protection of the French Ministry, for the exclusive right to trade with Louisiana for twenty years, and to supply negroes to the Spanish colonies. He would be able to take advantage of the opportunity to settle a number of other business affairs.

While he was quietly making his preparations for the journey so as to depart when the necessary instructions reached him, old M. Caron received a letter from his eldest daughter living, as we know, in Madrid with her husband and sister:

"My sister has been insulted by a man as influential as he is dangerous. Twice on the point of marrying her he has drawn back without even deigning to offer any excuse for his conduct. . . . All Madrid knows that my sister has nothing to reproach herself with." It may be said at once that the outraged sister, Marie Louise, was thirty-four years old.

Greatly perturbed, M. Caron consulted his son. Beaumarchais hastened his departure, took leave of his friends and the royal family, bade an affectionate fare-

well to his own people and Pauline, and set out about the 1st of May, 1764. One of his friends, Périer, an engineer who with his brothers afterwards became famous, travelled with him.

And as his carriage rolled over the King's uneven highway he thought out his plan of campaign against the dastard who had so basely compromised his sister. This man was Dom Joseph Clavigo, Keeper of the Crown Archives, founder of the foremost periodical in Madrid, and thus a man conspicuously in the public eye. He had been for some time a welcome guest in the house of the Carons, who held a sort of salon, and he was looked upon by all Madrid as a suitor for Marie Louise's hand. When he was appointed, after six years, Keeper of the Archives—they were to be married as soon as he obtained this appointment—he abruptly broke off all relations with his fiancée's family. Friends who frequented the Carons' salon were loud in their indignation. M. d'Ossun, the French ambassador, wrote Clavigo a letter of remonstrance. Betraying a certain anxiety he pretended to be repentant and was forgiven; but Marie Louise retained a disagreeable impression of his conduct.

In short, preparations for the wedding were once more in progress on both sides. The social world of Madrid was agog with this engagement so strangely broken off and renewed. To have everything in order with his superior officers, Clavigo set out for St. Hildephonse, the summer residence of the Spanish Court, to ask leave of absence from the Minister. He was away

for two days, and on his return wrote to Marie Louise declaring positively that he would not marry her. There was a second appeal to him from friends shocked by such infamous conduct. They met with a cool reception. Clavigo invited them not to persist and advised Marie Louise not to pretend to be an injured person, lest there should be reprisals. He was a high official with numerous connections and considerable influence, and by lifting his hand or issuing an order could ruin two unfortunate foreigners. It was then that Marie Louise fell ill. Her sister, Marie Joseph, tended her and, greatly grieved, decided to call France to her assistance by writing to her father and claiming the intervention of the ambassador through Pierre. His mind was filled with these things as his post-chaise jolted laboriously through the passes of the Pyrenees.

During the eleven months of his stay in Spain, Beaumarchais led the most engrossing, overflowing, volcanic life possible to conceive, lavishing his energies in every direction, bustling here, there and everywhere, engaging in all manner of activities, tearing from one drawing room to another, from the King's to an ambassador's, from a Minister's to his sisters', dashing off letters as the humour took him, trading, starting or dropping all manner of enterprises, visiting theatre and balls, composing music, songs, ballads, and editing a number of technical works on political economy. He was like a tornado!

He reached Madrid at eleven o'clock on the 18th of May inwardly deeply moved for it was twenty years

since he had seen his sisters. They were not expecting him at any given hour. His sweating horses, their collar bells jingling, pulled up outside the carriage gate. He shot out of his chaise, climbed up the front steps, banged on the knocker, and flung himself into the outstretched arms of his sisters in tears.

Then, exhausted after his journey, for he had been travelling for a fortnight, he asked for a bath. Water carriers were shouting in the streets, and the begrimed Beaumarchais was soon splashing about in his bath. Then came dinner on a sun-bathed terrace. A handsome girl with a copper-coloured complexion brought in wine, the joyous white wine of Alicante, in a terra-cotta jug. He had not seen a pretty woman for nearly three weeks, and his gaze lingered on the Andalusian's provocative figure. Already he had almost forgotten Pauline.

He was a wonderfully complex character was Beaumarchais. At once an idealist and a practical man, he had a keen sense of honour without being over troubled with scruples, or hesitating if need be to stifle them—extraordinarily brilliant and witty, seizing with a quick eye the ridiculous side of people and things, flippant, fickle and capricious and yet steadfast and even stubborn withal in his opinions, of versatile and supple understanding, passing quickly from grave to gay, and capable of every form of industry, with powers of intellectual penetration and great love of argument, and as apt to lapse into the commonplace and trivial as to rise to a high spiritual plane and an original outlook.

He had a mind for the conception of big undertakings. An ambitious man, bent on forcing himself to the front, on making himself conspicuous, he longed for an audience of some sort, a stage on which to act, a springboard from which he could be seen performing his tricks, colourless partners to do his bidding as heralds and to swell his own importance by the contrast. . . .

He sat down to table, munched with relish the sun-gorged fruits, sucked with a wry face pimento and lemons, jested and amused his sisters, his brother-in-law the architect, and his younger nephew—the elder was at school in Paris—by his childish wonder at the warmth of temperament, the highly strung, languorous manners of that land of Spain. Complacently he told them of his life at Court, his more or less lively adventures, embellishing and spicing them to his fancy. It was the air of the country!

Then they began to discuss Clavigo. Beaumarchais soon convinced himself that Lisette was bewailing the slur on her fair fame rather than her lost lover. Moreover, before leaving Paris he had received a letter from a man named Durand, a wholesale merchant established in Madrid, a friend of his sisters', declaring that his dearest wish was to marry Lisette. Beaumarchais was perplexed.

During the evening the Carons' salon received its habitual guests. Mme. Guilbert introduced her brother and explained the object of his journey. Among the company were two genial diplomats, two merchants, one being Durand, seemingly a charming fellow, a high

official, an officer of the Royal Guards, a portly Canon and a Court surgeon. Each one of the company spoke French, and as a rule art, literature, science and politics formed the subjects of their conversation.

Beaumarchais transformed the company into a tribunal. It was a question of passing judgment on Clavigo who was known to them all, and deciding what tactics should be pursued to bring the incident to a fitting close. Beaumarchais was soon in possession of every detail of Clavigo's conduct. He quickly gathered that Lisette was not far from hating him. It was clear that he was of doubtful character. He saw, too, that Durand's thoughts were centred on Lisette.

After supper Beaumarchais went up to his room. He felt himself capable of any audacity. He had considerable credit—notes payable to the bearer to the value of two hundred thousand francs which Duverney had placed in his hands in case of need. He was conscious of possessing the personality of a man of action; he would play the business man. He paced his room from end to end, gazed out of the window at the starry night, the many-coloured fairy lights in the mean streets, drank in the fragrant air and listened to the singing of the seguidillas that went up from the beggars and impostors who beset Madrid.

"Marry Lisette to Durand? Of course, but I must first punish Clavigo and put it out of his power to do any further mischief. This business has already caused such a sensation that I must settle it with a master hand, otherwise I shall never make a success of any-

thing—and I do need it! . . . Well, I must make a supreme effort. But how? What are you going to do, my dear Beaumarchais? Oh, but it's very simple. I haven't lived at Court for eight years without learning how to set about ruining a man, eh? He is an artful rogue. Diamond cut diamond. *First:* I must call on Dom Joseph Clavigo early tomorrow morning with my friend Périer. Tell him, to begin with, I have come on business—talk to him about his paper for instance. *Second:* Relate the whole thing in the form of a good story, see the face he pulls, and then tell him who I am. *Third:* Compel him to admit his deception and make him acknowledge it in writing. *Fourth:* Take the said acknowledgment to our ambassador. *Fifth:* Make dear Joseph believe that Lisette is ready to marry him. *Sixth:* Marry Durand and Lisette, Lison and Tonton!" Delighted with his scheme Beaumarchais made a movement to dance a minuet in his room.

But it was not such entirely plain sailing as he had imagined. He had to deal with no mean adversary. Clavigo was a wily rascal, and Beaumarchais for the time thought he was done for. While fooling him Clavigo was secretly plotting against him, and obtained an order for his expulsion. Warned in time Beaumarchais stole a march on him. He interviewed Ministers and even managed to see the King, and finally emerged victorious from a very delicate contest. Humiliated, disgraced, deprived of his appointment, Clavigo was forced to retire to the provinces and seek temporary oblivion.

Three weeks had sufficed to enable Beaumarchais to carry out his mission. Durand made love to Lisette, and Lisette let things take their course but she refused him. The Clavigo incident was over and done with and the one person most deserving of sympathy was Durand. Beaumarchais would have liked to make it up to him. He offered him the hand of his sister Tonton, the youngest of the family, who had blossomed into Jane Marguerite, without consulting her. But Tonton had other views. M. de Miron had cast his eyes on her. He was a friend of Périer who had no suspicion when he left Paris of this flame which until then lay smouldering.

CHAPTER IV

BEAUMARCHAIS was now able to harness himself to the industrial undertakings with which he had been entrusted, and to launch into a number of others on his own account. He wrote to his father:

"While I have had the misfortune to lose two thousand écus on the sale of provisions in France . . . the King of Spain and his Ministers are casting their eyes on me to take over the management of those in Spain . . . there is some idea of joining to this a contract for supplying corn for the nation's bread, and they speak of adding to this the manufacture of munitions so that I may find myself presently at the head of a company interested in stores, provisions, munitions and agriculture." No less than that! The "some idea" was Beaumarchais's of course. In addition to this he was prepared to undertake the supply of provisions to Turkey and the colonisation of one of the Sierras.

He drew up for the Duc de Choiseul a "Memoir on Spain" in which he stated simply: "Grimaldi, indolent and with little insight, and the Sicilian Esquilace, an old schemer, an extortioner grown grey in secret expedients to raise money—these are the two chief Span-

ish Ministers. The third, Ariega, the Minister for the Navy, is of no account." For these mere nonentities, however, he wrote a paper on Louisiana, another on the manufactures of Spain which he had inspected, and many reports on other matters. He devoted the major part of his time to these numerous enterprises and immensely increased his efforts and correspondence, keeping four secretaries and translators steadily at work.

Poor great man! Not one of his projects came to a head, and he returned to France without having achieved any definite result. Nevertheless from other points of view his year in Madrid was not wasted.

He lived in great style. He was thirty-two, of commanding presence and attractive manners. He retained the sprightliness of youth which, moreover, remained with him nearly all his life. "For ever and for ever the same," as he wrote later in one of his songs. His sparkling intellect was extraordinarily selective, assimilative, fertile. There was no subject which left him indifferent and he touched nothing that he did not adorn. He contributed something to the arts, the fruit of his reflections to the sciences, and plunged with assiduous activity into all the great questions of the day.

At the same time he made some delightful new friends in society. The Marquise de Fuen Clara's drawing room was the meeting place of the Spanish aristocracy and the best French society in Madrid. The Marquise possessed outside Madrid a magnificent house of the old style with spacious grounds. She was a very handsome woman, still young, intensely worldly-

ÉTIENNE-FRANÇOIS, DUC DE CHOISEUL (1719–1785)

minded, capricious, extravagant. Beaumarchais first called at Fuen Clara to collect a business account which had been owing to his father for some ten years. The Marquise received the cash-collector in a small boudoir hung with Spanish leather and Moorish tapestry. She found him charming and witty and invited him to come again. Beaumarchais greatly admired the decorations and the beauty of the Marquise, and when she spoke French her quaint accent brought a smile to his lips. And most of all he was irresistibly attracted by the Marquise's most intimate friend, the Marquise de la Croix, a Frenchwoman as gay as she was adorable. The Marquise de la Croix, whose husband, a Lieutenant General in the Artillery, was for ever up hill and down dale, led a somewhat frivolous life and loved amusement. She was the niece of Monseigneur de Jarente, Archbishop of Orleans, a friend of Beaumarchais, who had asked him to assist her advancement at Court by using the considerable influence of his many letters of introduction.

Beaumarchais was soon making violent love to her. She was a fair-haired beauty whose great, tender, grey-blue eyes imparted an uncommon charm, enhanced by a complexion tanned by the Castilian sun. He was attracted to her at first because she was a Frenchwoman, and, moreover, full of vivacity himself, he had small liking for the "romantic and languorous" women of Spain.

He was now in the prime of youth and strength: the eyes were piercing, he had a wide, high, smooth,

clear, slightly receding forehead, sensitive and sensual lips ready with an ironic retort, smile or kiss, wide nostrils, a bold, free and easy bearing, some conceit and above all inveterate high spirits. He was loved, but did he love in the full sense of the word? Not yet at all events. He loved women and the society of women but only with a superficial sentimentality.

He began by becoming the Marquise's lover. They went for long excursions together. She drove him round about Madrid in her carriage drawn by six mules. He dressed in the Spanish fashion in cloak and sombrero which suited him to perfection, and as the carriage rolled over the country with a great jingle of bells he made passionate love. Poor Pauline! . . . But she paid him back in his own coin when she heard of it though he did not know it until his return to France.

In the evenings he dined with M. d'Ossun, the French ambassador, or M. Grimaldi, the prime minister, unless engaged to sup with the Russian ambassador or Lord Rochford, the English ambassador. Then he gambled heavily with extraordinary good luck. Sometimes he supped alone with his handsome Marquise and on these occasions did not return to the domestic hearth in the Via Jacometrens.

At the instigation of the Marquise, who had literary tastes, Beaumarchais read more than ever. From his boyhood he had loved books, and especially Richardson's novels for which the Caron family evinced a special preference. The character of Sir Charles Grandison was beloved in the Rue St. Denis by old M. Caron and

in particular by Julie who affected to see in him some resemblance to her famous brother. Beaumarchais read Cervantes, and Guevara, and De Castro whose *El Diablo Cojuelo* and *Las Mocedades del Cid* were familiar to him in Lesage and Corneille.

In the galleries of the Escurial, whose wondrous paintings and library called forth his admiration, he made the acquaintance of an Italian adventurer named Pini, a crafty flatterer and toady who had managed somehow or other to become the personal servant and confidant of King Charles III of Spain. The King was depressed, the King was boring himself to death, and longed for some new distraction. Pini thought a great deal of Beaumarchais, looking upon him as the prince of adventurers and schemers:

"M. Beaumarchais, I have come to ask you to do me a little favour. My dear and revered master, Charles, is feeling dull. He wants a nice mistress, pretty, with a good figure, witty and cheerful, most of all cheerful, with some life in her. Cannot you who are so clever and inspire such confidence in every one, especially women, find a suitable lady for me? I should be very glad to get hold of this new diversion for poor Charles. He will be very grateful and I'll share what I make out of it with you. What do you say?"

Beaumarchais declined to accept any monetary advantage but did not refuse his services. He had the easy sentimentality of many of the famous men of his day, but on the other hand was pre-eminently a man of business. Educated in the school of Pâris Duverney

he now looked upon anything he might be called upon to undertake as a matter of business in whatever domain it happened to be—economic, financial, political, literary or sentimental.

. . . . . .

Mme. Guilbert's elder son died at school in Paris. Old M. Caron sent Beaumarchais, by diligence, a bundle of the youth's clothes, entrusting him with the task of breaking the news to the boy's parents, a sad duty that he fulfilled with delicate kindness.

His love affair with Pauline was in a bad way. Pauline complained of his inconstancy, vague echoes of which had reached her ears. Then he learnt of the death of Pichon, his poor cousin, in Santo Domingo, and over and above his real grief for this loss, the fate of the substantial sums invested in the development of Pauline's property caused him uneasiness. A little disheartened—a rare thing in his life—he wrote to his father: "To work and suffer—such is my lot." It was perhaps true for from that time onward Beaumarchais seldom enjoyed the peace of mind for which he declared he so eagerly longed. He was to go from intrigue to intrigue as though impelled by some sort of fatality, but also, it must be confessed, by his love of fame and adventure and even scandal, and his own innate and indisputable pugnacity.

From time to time he strove to withdraw from his affair with Pauline without showing his hand too openly. His sister Julie's letters, always vivacious, told him that his father, now sixty-seven, was thinking of marrying

again an old love of his, though his health was far from satisfactory. He was perturbed in mind and thought of returning to France.

His strictly commercial and diplomatic affairs were in no better case. He was put off by ministers and ambassadors with warm praises of his tact and resource but nevertheless put off: "In this country where everything is done *poco à poco* my *furia francese* cannot but amuse them," he wrote. Such was his position in January, 1765, after eight months residence in Spain.

And yet he remained until the beginning of the spring, writing verses, visiting the theatre, amusing himself, and bringing to a successful conclusion the project entrusted to him by Pini but in rather a peculiar fashion, significant of his lack of scruple and his way of regarding love as merely an agreeable intercourse. . . .

He took it upon himself to persuade the Marquise de la Croix that she could find no more complete consolation in view of his impending departure, or think of a better expedient than to become the King's mistress. He even went so far in his cynicism as to keep the Duc de Choiseul, the minister, informed of his proceedings as an act of diplomacy. And the Marquise, nothing loth, allowed herself to be persuaded. It was a wonderful age!

One evening, with every precaution of secrecy, Pini brought the King, and Beaumarchais the Marquise, to a small pavilion near the Palace. Overcome by the prospect of a life of pleasure, dazzling dresses and jewels, for which, moreover, she was eminently suited, the

coquette, all blushes and excitement, was seated beside her benevolent lover, Beaumarchais, waiting the King's arrival. Pini, followed by the King, came in through a private door. The King was a man of medium height and sturdy build. An inveterate sportsman he had lived a simple and ordinary life since the death of his Queen in 1760. Jovial, kind-hearted, and affable, of average intelligence and with a conscientious sense of his duties as a King, he was fifty years old and a good sort. He left the pavilion intensely enamoured of the Marquise. She was an exquisite jewel! The Marquise was much less charmed, but the temptation of forbidden fruit, the prospect of luxury, and the King's easy going character, helped her to make up her mind.

A fortnight later the Marquise de la Croix was presented at Court. Her husband, by way of consolation and compensation, received a royal decoration, Pini was pensioned, and Beaumarchais, proud of such distinguished services, after generously asking his friend Grimaldi to pardon Clavigo, an act of grace which was only too readily accorded, could make his preparations to take coach for Paris.

He returned home precisely a year after his departure, bringing back from Spain a somewhat vague impression of it, due to the manifold diversity of this motley land, a number of verses and scrawls on music paper, many striking memories characteristic of Spain, especially stage memories, and a decided taste for this fine art which he had loved from his youth—not to mention two boxes of cocoa obtained with great

KING CHARLES III OF SPAIN

From an old copper print

difficulty for Monseigneur de Jarente, Archbishop of Orleans.

On his return invitations to dinner were showered on him: from the Duc d'Orleans, Mme. de Tessé and the Duc de Noailles, her father, Le Normand d'Etioles, who since the death of Mme. de Pompadour had married again, Monseigneur de Jarente—in short from more or less everyone. He first called in his old friend Pâris Duverney to whom he recounted the outcome of his various activities in Spain—in a word, nothing!

"Well, and a good thing too," said Duverney. "The State is selling the Forest of Chinon because the coffers are empty. It will be a huge source of profit for the man who knows how to set about it. By leasing the exploitation of woods and the felling of trees a wonderful business may be done. Are you willing to join me in it?" Beaumarchais believed in its success and saw a vision of immense profits, and the affair was settled on the spot. It was one point scored.

He resumed his duties as a judge of "pallid rabbits" to use his own phrase. As the result of an offence against the game laws committed by the Prince de Conti's servants, Beaumarchais, as Lieutenant General, ordered the Prince to make good the damage. The Prince began by having a dispute with Beaumarchais and quibbling over the decision. It was apparently an old trick of his for Louis XV always called him "my cousin the lawyer." But Beaumarchais showed such patience and courtesy in explaining the wrongs of the case that the Prince gave way with good grace. Judge

and defendant soon struck up a friendship. Through the Prince de Conti, Beaumarchais became acquainted with the flower of European nobility, the Prince de Ligne in particular, almost a man of wit like himself. And the Prince de Conti invariably afterwards proved himself a kindly disposed and steady friend, never abandoning him even at the time when his relatives were looking askance at him.

To thank Duverney for his hospitality of some days at his country house near Nogent sur Marne, the "stern Minos of the Louvre" took up his lyre and sung with unwonted lyricism of the beauties of his delightful visit:

> I love to gaze on the rich vale below,
> On fields and fallows in a cameo set,
> To watch the glassy river's gentle flow,
> Each loitering wave a lingering regret.

On his return he found a certain Chevalier de Séguirand on the best of terms with Pauline, whom he asked without effect for some explanation. He got from her scant comfort. The Chevalier was a countryman of Pauline's, and she had introduced him to the Rue de Condé on the plea that he was in love with Julie Caron. Poor Julie! She was to remain single. . . .

Pauline still seemed willing to marry Beaumarchais but he felt that she had some secret intention. He was suspicious of a snare. He grew incensed. He set out for Flanders without any definite aim it seems, but possibly to put Pauline to the test. The proof was conclusive. Beaumarchais soon learnt that the Cheva-

lier, despite his written denials, was making a bid for Pauline's hand, and had not been refused.

About the same time Mme. Buffault, the wife of a wholesale merchant, who knew Beaumarchais, said to him one day:

"My dear Beaumarchais, I have a good match to suggest to you. She is a friend of mine, and we were in the same convent school together—Geneviève Lévêque, widow of a Keeper General of des Menus Plaisirs. She has a pretty face, a nice fortune, is still quite young, has literary and artistic tastes and any number of good qualities. How does it strike you?"

"Hum, hum. I can't say anything at present. I have other plans in view, but we might arrange an interview."

"Yes, that will do. Tomorrow we shall be driving in the Tuileries. You must be there about three o'clock in the afternoon. Look here, be in the Widow's Drive —it will be symbolical!"

Next day at the appointed hour Beaumarchais was prancing the Avenues des Tuileries on a superb horse whose long tail swept the ground. The carriage in which the two ladies were seated came up at a walking pace. He made a bow to Mme. Buffault and eyed her friend.

"How like my sweet and charming Marquise! Why should I not fall in love with her?" He rode alongside the carriage chatting to Mme. Buffault, and was invited to join them. He accepted and leaving his mount with his man stepped into the carriage. What a pretty and

elegant woman she was and how strangely she resembled the Marquise de la Croix! And yet she was more sedate, more self-possessed, seemed soft-hearted and companionable. This time it was almost love at first sight. But how long would it last?

It was at this time that old M. Caron married as his second wife the elderly lady to whom he had been attached for some years. As to Tonton whose pseudonym, invented by Beaumarchais, was Mlle. de Boisgarnier, she was more than ever taken with Octave de Miron and her marriage was in sight.

Hesitating still on his own account, Beaumarchais wrote to Pauline asking her to put matters on a definite footing. She made no reply, and Pierre now knew how he stood with her. The two creoles were married at the beginning of 1767, and not long after Miron and Tonton followed suit. Pauline was still in Pierre's debt, and he transferred the obligation to the Chevalier de Séguirand. After endless dispute between debtor and creditor Beaumarchais agreed to a general statement of account greatly to Pauline's advantage since the amount of her debt was reduced to twenty-four thousand, five hundred francs. And yet he was never to receive the money laid out by him on the estate. Pauline was unable to pay for the Chevalier died a year later.

Beaumarchais did not wait for the Chevalier's death nor even for Pauline's marriage to begin his attentions to Mme. Lévêque. There was no doubt he was a great success with young, rich widows but that did not pre-

vent him from embarking upon divers other speculations!

He was often the guest of Le Normand at whose house impromptu little burlesque scenes—improvised farces—were acted, and Beaumarchais gave free play to his fancy in his contributions to these amusements. And one fine day he was to enter the dramatic arena in real earnest. Although he was too busily occupied in his duties at Court and on the bench and in his forestry business to regard his literary work as anything more than "an agreeable pastime," he plunged into the art of playwriting and in entirely paradoxical circumstances. Beaumarchais, the fine fellow, the man of pleasure, the darling of the sex, was to attack the morals of his day in a literary form quite foreign to his own character. It was by one of those heavy and tearful dramas that he was to reveal himself as a playwright.

He sketched out the plot very quickly and then losing heart at the difficulties of stage construction, put his work aside. But at the revival of Diderot's *Père de Famille*, at which he was present, he was swept away by enthusiasm for the theatre and returned to his task with yet greater ardour.

He spared no effort to ensure the success of his first flight in dramatic art. He invited a number of great persons to hear him read the play: the Princesses, the Duc de Nivernois, a member of the Academy, who gave him excellent advice and suggested certain modifications of which he availed himself; and other distinguished friends.

It was a drama of society and the scene was located in the "pleasure retreat" of a great lord. The custom was widespread among the nobility in the reign of Louis XV to set aside a pavilion in which ladies of easy virtue were kept, and sometimes over-credulous young girls and women initiated into vice. *Eugénie*, "this child of sensibility," to use his own phrase, was submitted to the censor in the person of M. Marin, destined to achieve immortality some years later in the course of a lawsuit in which Beaumarchais held him up to merciless ridicule. Beaumarchais was compelled to transfer the scene of the play to England and Breton actors became for the nonce English citizens. He took great pains with *Eugénie*. It covered three hundred pages of his own handwriting, and he drafted seven different versions of it.

Eugénie was produced on the 25th of January, 1767. The first performance took place at the Théâtre Français as the Comédie Française was then called. The ordinary theatregoer dared neither applaud nor encourage Beaumarchais in his outspokenness, but the nobility, their parasites, the women accustomed to frequent "pleasure retreats," and the entire rabble of inferior newspaper men, critics, clever incapables, would-be authors, and the envious generally, raised their voices in chorus against the play which in their eyes was scandalous.

Beaumarchais was in his element, for he was able to take up the cudgels in his own defence. He sharpened his pen and fell upon his detractors in a preface

LOUIS XV

After the painting by J. B. le Moyne

of forty pages in which he administered to each one the castigation he deserved. But on the other hand he did not think it beneath his dignity to revise the play and suppress a few passages with the result that on the second performance the situation was brilliantly retrieved.

On Good Friday in 1768 he was involved in a difference with the King. It was brought about indirectly but was unmistakable, and he long had reason to regret it. On that day the Duc de la Vallière had driven him to Versailles after spending the morning with him at the Tribunal of the Louvre.

"My dear fellow," said the Duc de la Vallière, "I am having supper tonight in the private apartments with the King, Mme. du Barry and a few of the chosen. I am looking for an interesting subject to talk about."

"If the company is dull tell them Sophie Arnould's answer to the Comte de Lauraguais who asked her recently: 'Do you remember Sophie when we were first lovers and I slipped every night into your father's house?'

" 'Ah, those were happy days,' she exclaimed. 'How miserable we were.'

"If on the other hand the company is getting too lively ask this question for instance: 'Has your Majesty ever thought, while we were making merry here, that you owe more francs of twenty sous than the number of minutes which have elapsed since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?'

"They will deny your figures, and each take pencil and paper, but in the end have to admit you are right. The King owes something round two thousand million francs."

The Duc de la Vallière laughingly tested the calculation, and lost no time that night in serving up this dish at supper, which was too gay seeing it was Good Friday. The King suddenly became serious and said:

"This witticism rather reminds me of the skeleton that used to be served up, they say, in ancient times between the courses at Egyptian banquets so as to moderate the guests' boisterous gaiety. Do we owe this moral story to you, Duc?"

A courtier before everything else, the Duc de la Vallières answered:

"No, sire, we owe it to Beaumarchais who, driving up with me this morning, crammed my head with his little sum in arithmetic."

"The arithmetic of a watchmaker," it was said and they all made an onslaught upon Beaumarchais. In showing himself off as a too clever financier he had estranged the King and his favourites. It was a serious blunder as some years later he was to realise.

On the 11th of April, 1768, Beaumarchais married the young widow, Geneviève Watebled Lévêque, and pledged himself to become an exemplary husband. He appears to have been an impatient lover, not waiting for the marriage ceremony, and the following December a son was born whom he named Pierre Augustin Eugène. He established his wife at Pantin, then a rustic village,

and left for Touraine to inspect his wood-selling business and give it an impetus. He wrote to his wife:

"July 15th, 1769.

"You ask me to write to you my dear love. I will do so with all my heart. It is an agreeable recreation after the enforced exertions of my stay in this village. . . ."

He tells her about his work in detail and goes on:

"You see, dear love, we do not sleep so much here as at Pantin; but the activity which my work forces on me is not displeasing. Since my arrival in this retreat, out of reach as it is of empty pleasures, I have seen none but natural and simple-minded persons. . . . I live in my offices and these are in a good rustic farm, between the poultry yard and the kitchen garden, and surrounded by a quickset hedge. My bedroom, whose four walls are upholstered in whitewash, is furnished with a sorry bed in which I sleep the whole night long; four rush-bottomed chairs, an oak table, a large bare fireplace without mantelpiece or ornaments. But I can see from my windows as I write to you, the meadows and plains of the valley which I inhabit filled with robust men of swarthy complexion who are cutting and carting off fodder with their teams of oxen; a multitude of women and girls, with rakes on their shoulders or in their hands, are filling the air as they work with their lively songs which I can hear from my table. Through the trees in the distance I can see the winding stream of

the Indre, and an ancient château flanked by its turrets. The whole scene is crowned by the tufted summits of the trees which increase in number until they are lost in the crests of the heights which surround us. . . . This picture is not without its charm. Coarse, wholesome bread, food which is more than simple, with execrable wine make up my diet. . . . Adieu my love, and over and above that, goodnight. I am going to bed . . . without you however . . . this seems hard to me sometimes. And my son, my son, how is he? I laugh when I think that I am working for him."

Early in 1770 he produced a new play which had been announced for some time under different titles such as *The Favour Returned*, *The Merchant of Lyons*, *The Farmer General's Tour*, but in the end it was called *The Two Friends or the Merchant of Lyons* (*Les deux Amis ou le Commercant de Lyon*). The piece was not a success. On the play-bill some wag wrote under the title, *The Two Friends*, "By an author who has none." Malice and ill-will were on the watch for him. He was reproached for lack of originality in *Eugénie*, and Palissot had written in pungent lines though the second was untrue:

> Beaumarchais, the obscure, can only make us gape,
> Of Diderot, his god, he's the ineffectual ape.

He wrote *The Two Friends* to assert his own opinions. It embodies, indeed, the story of Pauline. At any rate in the Pauline of the play he was drawing a

definite portrait. Nevertheless the character was unconvincing, a failure, like the play itself. On this occasion it was Grimm who expressed the general feeling of the public:

> I've seen Beaumarchais's play which is absurd,
> I'll tell you all about it in a word—
> 'Tis an Exchange where money circulates all day
> Without producing any interest in the play.

The plot was loosely constructed and vague, and at one of the performances a wit shouted from the floor of the house: "Let's have the solution of the riddle in the next number of the *Mercure*, please." Unlucky playwright!

PART II

ZENITH

CHAPTER I

"What is your retort to sham criticism, insult and clamour?"
"Nothing."

The Two Friends.

IT was about this time that a cloud that had arisen between Beaumarchais and Pâris Duverney—in spite of themselves for that matter—after the settlement of their partnership in the Forest of Chinon, seemed to grow darker. Someone was trying to keep the two friends apart. It was the Comte de la Blache, Pâris Duverney's grand-nephew, who had already succeeded in ousting his cousin Mezieu, and as Duverney's heir, wanted to keep him to himself, put him under a sort of tutelage and withdraw him from any influence other than his own.

Duverney was an old man and dared not offer too open a resistance. He knew that the Comte was keeping watch on his and Beaumarchais's words and deeds. The two friends met less frequently. They corresponded about their common business interests but in secret and in an agreed language, their "oriental style" as Beaumarchais humorously called it. It was a style particularly cryptic to the inquisitive eye of posterity. Thus:

"Read, my beauty, what I am sending you and give me your opinion about it. You know quite well that in an affair of this sort I can decide nothing without you.

"I am using our oriental style on account of the means by which I am having this jewel of a letter conveyed to you. Give me your opinion, and give it quickly for time flies. Goodbye, my love, I embrace you as warmly as I love you. I don't send you any messages from the Beauty. Her own letter to you will be enough."

Another letter:

"I cannot understand how such an idea could be conceived since it is beyond my power to carry it out. I wish this may turn out to your mistress's good. Everything is for the best if she shares your opinion. To express my own would be unbecoming as I should be setting myself between the jealous lover [La Blache] and the well-guarded wife [Duverney]. I think success will be difficult."

They still remained, it is easy to see, on terms of close friendship. The Comte had his suspicions and made every effort to destroy the steady affection existing between the young man and the old. Under the influence of his satellite, a crafty and unscrupulous man named Chatillon, formerly the clerk of a broken-down lawyer, he stooped so low as to allow anonymous letters full of infamous suggestions to be sent to both men.

It made no difference. In a spirit of quiet philosophy they sent each other by post the scurrilous letters for each knew whence the blows came. Beaumarchais

was unaware of La Blache's personal hatred of him. La Blache kept Duverney apart from all his friends, and changed his clerks, his accountant, his solicitor Dupont, whom Beaumarchais knew well, and the poor old man was without the courage to rebel. He felt that his end was near and let things be.

Apprehensive of the future in view of Duverney's advanced age—he was eighty-six—Beaumarchais on several occasions asked him for an adjustment of the accounts between them. Duverney for his part raised no objection but failed to see any immediate necessity. Beaumarchais persisted and Duverney strove to defeat his grand-nephew's vigilance—it had come to that—and to make an appointment with his partner. The interview was fixed for about the 15th of March.

Duverney sent a line to Beaumarchais:

"Tomorrow between five and six o'clock. If I am not there you must wait for me, because to ensure perfect freedom I will leave the house." And the poor old man escaped rather than left his house through a private door in the rear of his garden and hurried on foot to meet Beaumarchais.

"My dear friend," he said, walking sadly with him to the Barrière de l'Enfer, "I am very sorry to have seen so little of you and kept you waiting. I am very old and infirm, you know, and my movements are no longer free. I sent for my nephew to come to me here some six months ago. It had to be because I wished to make him my sole legatee except for a few mementoes which I shall leave to one or two others. I know very

well that I have lost my liberty now, but how can I help it? He dislikes you and tells everyone so and does his utmost to keep us apart. You stay away from me, and you are quite right for he would try to pick a quarrel with you.

"I made this appointment with you secretly, like others I suggested to you but you declined. I am rather ashamed of it, but you know that, for my letters have repeatedly told you so. I can't do anything else.

"La Blache was an orphan brought up by me in my own house, and he is jealous of any outside influence, of any friendship which he considers likely to endanger his inheritance. I am under no illusion about him. He is very grasping. But it can't be helped. I made him my legatee some time ago. He is aware of it, and I can't change anything now."

"I know all this, M. Duverney, but these secret meetings disgust me. I agreed to this one because we must square up our accounts for we can never be certain of the morrow."

Beaumarchais would have liked to withdraw his capital. Moreover he sincerely pitied his old friend. Some days later he wrote to him:

"How are you and in particular how is your head? You know that I do not approve of your extreme mortification over this last annoyance. My dear fellow, this military school will be the death of you. Let me hear from you."

And again on the 29th of March:

"As my good friend fears to employ his solicitor

COUNT JOSEPH ALEXANDRE FALCOZ DE LA BLACHE

From an old print

because of his unfortunate surroundings, I will get my own to draw up the document. If he approves, it shall be done tomorrow evening and sent to him at once for signature and so forth."

The account between them was at last agreed by letter in secret and signed by the two parties, the date, the 1st of April, 1770, being in Duverney's handwriting. Their partnership in the purchase of the Forest of Chinon had not come up to expectations and, according to the account, Duverney owed Beaumarchais fifteen thousand francs. There are two further letters from Beaumarchais on the subject:

"15th June, 1770.

"A little of our oriental style to lighten the subject. How goes the dear little girl [Duverney]? It is a long time since we embraced. We are queer lovers. We dare not see each other because our parents frown at us; but we still love each other. Come now, my dear child, I returned your letters and portraits. Would you like to do the same with mine or I shall get angry at the finish. Another point: since the great bill, the bill which makes it appear that after being closely associated, we are now scarcely anything to each other [this refers to the settlement of accounts] I have had to do with certain florists [creditors] who are beginning to press me for the flowers I promised them. The little girl knows that the word flower originally meant a nice little piece of money, and to say flowery things to women was to shower gold upon them; and this so

greatly delighted the suckling sex that it decided to keep the word, in its figurative sense, in the lover's dictionary.

"I should like the little girl, therefore, to say flowery things to me on the subject of balancing the big bill, and make me up a beautiful bouquet. The use of these yellow flowers [gold] is most convenient. These pretty yellow flowers with their royal heads that we made to go the pace in the little girl's service in days gone by! [In Spain and Touraine.] I do not fix the size of the bouquet. I know she does things with a flourish! But Monday is the holiday when this bouquet must go to the florists. Will the little girl kindly say when I may send to her?"

And three days later:

"18th June, 1770.

"M. de Beaumarchais is confined to his bed with fever which is said to be intermittent (this is M. Tronchin's word) and has the honour to so inform M. Duverney. It is this illness which has prevented him from bringing to M. Duverney's kind recollection the fact that he was to send him important documents, the arrival of which, truth to tell, would give the poor invalid great pleasure."

Duverney died on the 10th of July. Beaumarchais had been confined to his bed for three weeks and unable to go to him as had been agreed for the fifteen thousand francs, nor could Duverney send the money to him.

In the autumn Beaumarchais submitted his claim

and made a request, in due form, to La Blache, now in possession of his late uncle's millions, for settlement of the account.

It was at this time, the 20th of November, 1770, that his wife suddenly died, leaving him greatly impoverished, for almost the whole of her income was terminable with her life. For a second time, therefore, Beaumarchais's material position was reduced from comparative wealth to poverty. He was left with one son to whom he was devoted and whose childish prattle he loved to repeat to his friends. Nevertheless his enemies were already hinting, as in the case of his first wife, that he had poisoned her. These sorry slanderers would have been hard put to it to explain his motives. It did not apparently occur to them that as Mme. Beaumarchais's means consisted of a life interest in certain property it was to her husband's interests for her to live long. Moreover, the existence of the child entirely destroyed these ignominious insinuations.

For the time being negotiations with La Blache were interrupted but subsequently resumed. Beaumarchais wrote insistently to the Comte without effect. After six months of more or less polite quibbling he received a letter from him in these terms:

"Tuesday the 7th.

"To M. de Beaumarchais, Paris.

"Although I do not consider myself obliged, monsieur, to answer the insistent request which you have been making for some time for me to take cognisance

of you as a creditor, I will call to-night at your solicitor's to examine the account. If it is to the fear of ennui or wearisome explanations that you attribute my fear, as you suppose, of meeting you there, I give up my defence on this point. As to the enlightenment that I should gain and with which you flatter me, not wishing to obtain anything it is equally easy to ask for nothing; on this, monsieur, as on other things I know enough of the meaning of behaviour to feel able to dispense with learning anything from you. I am entirely, monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant

"La Blache."

That evening they met at the office of M. Mommet, Beaumarchais's solicitor.

The Comte was a handsome young man who wore a contemptuous expression and a monocle, and seemed to be bestowing a favour on Beaumarchais by casting a glance at the copy of the agreement, made in duplicate between Duverney and Beaumarchais, which was laid before him.

"This is not my uncle's signature. I look upon the deed as a forgery."

Beaumarchais gave a start and protested. But the Comte after uttering violent threats had by this time seized his hat, stick and gloves and was striding downstairs. Beaumarchais knew that nothing was to be gained by adopting a conciliatory attitude. The Comte had come up with the deliberate intention of making an allegation of forgery.

Beaumarchais wrote again, asking him to bring along Duverney's clerks who were familiar with Duverney's signature. After some amount of evasion and the solicitor's intervention the Comte assented. The clerks declared positively that the signature was Duverney's. The Comte again said: "I look upon this deed as a forgery. I shall have it set aside." And, as before, he walked out refusing to listen to another word, leaving his clerks up in arms. M. Mommet scratched his head and Beaumarchais sank into a chair muttering: "The man is mad. He wants to ruin me but I must be the one to ruin him."

Meantime La Blache drove off to his lawyer, M. Caillard, a very shrewd man as will be seen. Beaumarchais hastened to the Law Courts, saw three lawyers whom he knew, and put his case before them. M. Malbeste, who was a particular friend, asked:

"I suppose you feel confident of the merits of your case? Have you Duverney's letters dealing with this settlement of accounts proving your case?"

"Why yes, and in fact Duverney when he replied to me usually wrote on the other side of the paper. The genuineness of these documents cannot be denied."

"Then wait and stand your ground. If you are attacked you can defend yourself. As to your claim for the fifteen thousand francs which Duverney owed you, you would do well to forego it."

Beaumarchais did not look upon it in that light. As a creditor, a slandered creditor, he wanted an apology and the money due to him. He betook himself to the

École Militaire to see M. de Mezieu, the director, Duverney's second nephew. Duverney had sacrificed de Mezieu in his will to La Blache. At the instigation of La Blache, hungering for the whole inheritance, he was ignored. Beaumarchais, who had a great liking for de Mezieu, had often reproached Duverney for his lack of generosity towards him but to no purpose.

"My dear fellow," said de Mezieu when Beaumarchais had stated his case and asked his opinion, "I have every reason to dislike La Blache who was always my rival with my uncle. If he were an honest man, a good fellow, I shouldn't worry much about it. But what hurts me most is that my uncle should have preferred him to me for there is nothing noble about him except his name. He is a low-minded creature. He certainly has brains but is without decent feelings. I have seen him at work. I have heard the echoes of his work. We employ the same solicitor, M. d'Outremont. La Blache went to see him recently about your business, and in front of the head clerk yelled: 'It will take him ten years to get his fifteen thousand francs and I shall have ruined his reputation before then.' A little while ago he said to your friend, the Duc de Chaulnes, who was sounding your praises: 'I hate Beaumarchais as a lover loves his mistress.' The Duc de Chaulnes laughed and thinking of Mlle. Ménard, his own mistress, made answer: 'My dear fellow, I love my mistress a great deal and I don't hate Beaumarchais at all.'

"I went to see my uncle once or twice during the

last few days of his illness, and on one occasion he showed me a rather bulky bag near the fireplace and said: 'I have fixed up accounts with our friend Beaumarchais. He is to come for this bag soon.'"

"Ah, hang it all, why was I down with a bad fever, unable to stir from my bed for a couple of months. The whole thing would have been settled by now. I did not even see him during his last hours," returned Beaumarchais.

"When he died," went on de Mezieu, "I was in the drawing room with some distant relatives and grand nephews, and we knew his last hour had come. Here, too, was the old servant who had been with him as long as I can remember and whom La Blache turned away as soon as my uncle died. He hated my cousin. 'You have no idea,' he said, 'how avaricious the Comte is. His solicitor has been here in the anteroom since the morning. They are both waiting for M. Duverney to recover sufficient strength to sign some paper. Last night he refused but to-day he is near his end, and they are applying restoratives so that the poor old man will probably do as they wish. At this moment the Comte is turning everything upside down in M. Duverney's desk, and yet he is coming into hundreds and thousands!' He wrung his hands and wept as he spoke and I feel sure he was telling the truth."

"You have given me some valuable information," said Beaumarchais.

"I should be glad to see you get the better of him in this particular matter," went on Mezieu. "You have

right on your side but on the other hand he has considerable power of doing mischief and his lawyer is a cunning rascal. . . ."

The Prince de Conti summed up the position in a terse sentence: "Beaumarchais must either be paid or hanged!" Beaumarchais, who never lost an opportunity of making a pun, however bad it might be, at once retorted: "Very well, but if I gain my case, ought not my adversary to pay something *cord*ially himself?" And Sophie Arnould, always ready with a quip, said: "You see he will live to be hanged but the rope will break!"

Meantime Beaumarchais began legal proceedings against La Blache in the Court of First Instance. La Blache brought a counter claim to have the contract set aside as null and void on the grounds of forgery and fraud. Moreover, he presented his case in such a form as to invalidate Beaumarchais's claim for fifteen thousand francs while claiming the one hundred and thirty-nine thousand francs which had appeared in the statement of accounts as due from Beaumarchais to Duverney before the final settlement was made.

Meantime the Comte hunted up every Master of the Court of First Instance, forced himself into their presence, and spread the most atrocious accusations against Beaumarchais. It meant a recital of the anonymous letters received by Pâris Duverney during his last days.

"In the action between Beaumarchais and me, which you will soon have to try, I should not like you

to be deceived by appearances and decide in favour of this vulgar person turned out of doors by his father for theft and vice when he was sixteen. He became a street porter and then a strolling player; murdered his first wife and poisoned his second. In Spain he gambled heavily and cheated and ruined the reputation of his sister's fiancé and had him dismissed from his post. He extorted money from my uncle and the Princesses who have driven him from their presence. He is the worst type of man. . . ."

Some of the Masters listened to him and almost believed him; others listened and disbelieved him; others again, too few unfortunately, showed him the door at his first word.

One day Caillard, La Blache's lawyer, applied to Beaumarchais's lawyer for a new production of documents—the deed of the 1st of April and Pâris Duverney's letters. Suspicious of this master of cunning, Beaumarchais himself sent the papers to Caillard dated, counted and numbered. Five days later they were returned to Beaumarchais's lawyer. Next day at the sitting of the Court Caillard snuffled:

"I am to-day bringing you definite proof of M. Caron's forgery. The file includes a letter alleged to have been sent by M. Duverney to the said M. Caron and you will find it here. This letter is dated the 5th of April, 1770, and Caron sets great store on it. Now at the bottom of this letter you will observe partly hidden by the wax seal the written words *M. de Beaumarchais*. This name should be in M. Duverney's writing, showing

presumably the person to whom it is addressed. Now, gentlemen, part of the said name is covered by a wax seal. What is the inference to be drawn except that M. Caron forged this letter, put the name and seal upon it inadvertently, and broke the seal in reopening the letter, hiding in this way part of the address? Here you have a proof of his fraudulent manœuvres."

It was in effect a crushing charge and the Court, passing the letter round, could not but note the fact. The letter was handed to Beaumarchais at his request for he suspected some trick; the letter must have been "faked." But before Beaumarchais had time to expose the imposture his attorney exclaimed, holding the letter in his hand:

"Gentlemen, what are we to think of our opponents? It was I who wrote the name of my client on this letter some fortnight ago to file the brief and this document annexed to it, and one of our adversaries has since then put a seal on it. I offer to prove what I say here and now by writing as many times as you like Beaumarchais's name in my ordinary handwriting to show you that it is in fact my handwriting which has been covered with a wax seal in order to make it appear as if my client forged the letter."

The lawyer did as he suggested, the Court accepted his evidence, and Caillard, La Blache, Chatillon and company were confounded. From that moment the case was won. . . .

At last, in the middle of February, 1772, the great day arrived. With a learned array of "whereas's," each

more logical and substantial than the other, Maître Dufour, the judge advocate, summed up the case, vindicating Beaumarchais's good faith and the justice of his claim. The final judgment confirmed the report. The allegation of forgery was dismissed and the Comte de la Blache was ordered to pay the fifteen thousand francs and the costs of the action. La Blache gave notice of appeal.

Many of Beaumarchais's acquaintances and not the least considerable in social rank waited on him after the judgment and showed by the warmth of their enthusiasm—in those days, as in Molière's, people fell into each other's arms though they had taken leave only an hour before—that if he had implacable enemies he also had stalwart friends.

They offered him hospitality, wanted to monopolise him. The great ones were proud of such a protégé and lesser citizens were equally proud of being seen in his company, while those who needed him, ordinary men whom he had helped and protected, admired and respected him all the more. The result of the appeal was still to come but he emerged from the case with an enhanced reputation while its infamous and ludicrous effect fell wholly on Major General the Comte Joseph Alexandre Falcoz de la Blache.

A few months later Guilbert, his brother-in-law, lost his reason and died in Madrid. Marie Joseph with her son and daughter and Marie Louise returned to Paris and took up their residence with Beaumarchais in the Rue de Condé.

CHAPTER II

"From the back seat of a coach I saw them lower the bridge of a prison in which for months I lacked nothing but bare necessaries."

The Marriage of Figaro.

SOON after his wife's death Beaumarchais was introduced in Mme. d'Hauteville's literary salon to a young man longing to know him. Some little time afterwards this same young man, Gudin de la Brenellerie, met Beaumarchais again at the house of Mme. de Miron, his sister, and did not conceal his admiration. Beaumarchais was not insensible to flattery, and Gudin, having submitted some verses to him, he invited him to his house, gave him advice, and, in short, won his heart to such purpose that Gudin soon became his devoted and inseparable follower and friend. For nearly a year Beaumarchais enjoyed relative tranquillity and increasing consideration. La Blache for the time being left him in peace, and he devoted himself to his own affairs and his son, and put the finishing touches to *The Barber of Seville.*

The Barber of Seville! His mind had dwelt upon this play since his return from Spain and he had worked on it at intervals when the vortex of his occupations

allowed him the leisure. The piece suffered many metamorphoses and reincarnations. Beaumarchais gradually based the whole work upon his first sketch; but he added to it and even changed its aim and character. Comedy, farce, comic opera in turn, the play assumed its final shape in 1770. In the spring of 1772 he began to read snatches of it to his friends. And then he submitted it to the Italian comedians.

Meantime, on the 17th of October, less than two years after his wife's death, his only son, barely four years old, passed away. He was very fond of the child, but without being unfeeling he was never greatly affected for any length of time by the loss of relatives, and neither his own letters nor those of his intimate friends show any trace of undue grief, even immediately after such events, except one letter written on the day of his wife's death. In short, it would seem that this kind of affliction passed over him without ruffling save temporarily his high spirits and light-hearted activities. . . .

With little insight the Italian players declined his play. The main reason, it seems, was that the chief actor, a man named Clerval, was a barber in his younger days, and he would have considered it derogatory to play a part, which he possibly thought was aimed at himself. Beaumarchais grew more and more bent on its production. But he revised and changed the characters, the dialogue in particular, and raised the tone of his hero; and one day these characters which in the earlier version were redolent of the Théâtre de la Foire,

would rise to a new dignity and knock at the door of the Théâtre Français. It was Scapin, the tricky valet in Molière's comedy, who opened the door to Figaro.

The Barber of Seville was set down for production during February, 1773. But Beaumarchais's quarrel with the Duc de Chaulnes intervened, and it was postponed to a later date.

. . . . . .

For nearly ten years up to this time the Duc de Chaulnes, formerly M. de Péquigny, had been an intimate friend of Beaumarchais. Of giant stature and a man of intelligence, he had devoted himself with some success, like his father before him, to the study of physics and chemistry. He was nine years younger than Beaumarchais. Of violent and eccentric disposition, he was not on good terms with his family. A year before he had fought a duel with one of his English friends following a scientific discussion in which they could not agree, and been wounded.

Mlle. Ménard, a young actress, had been living under the protection of the Duc de Chaulnes and had had one child by him. Tired of his violence and brutality she left him one fine day in December, 1772, and quietly set out for the country, merely leaving word that her departure was to be taken as a friendly rupture of their relations, but that she intended to return to Paris before long and even to see him again as a friend when once he had become resigned to the inevitable and she had had a rest. Beaumarchais used often to visit Mlle. Ménard with the duke and dine at her place

with Gudin, Sedaine, Marmontel and other friends. At the time of the rupture he was on very good terms with her—he happened to have given up his last mistress, a daughter of the Duc de Broglie, now about to be married—but he was not of course on quite such good terms with the Duc de Chaulnes who rightly or wrongly had grown suspicious. None the less the duke borrowed money from him and they remained in friendly intercourse.

On her return to Paris in 1773, Mlle. Ménard sent a line to Beaumarchais, and doubtless to other friends, telling him she was at home to him again. Beaumarchais, as a shrewd hypocrite, wrote to the Duc de Chaulnes of his intention to visit "Mme. Ménard" before long and congratulating him, in their mutual interests, on this amicable separation which put an end to a state of warfare between them otherwise likely, in his opinion, to increase. He had already discussed the subject with the duke in moments of intimacy and was lavish with his advice, not perhaps wholly disinterested. However that may be, about eleven o'clock in the morning of the 11th of February, 1773, the Duc de Chaulnes met Beaumarchais on the stairs coming away from Mlle. Ménard. As may be imagined the greeting between them was cool.

"Good morning, monsieur," said the Duc de Chaulnes, fiercely shaking Beaumarchais's hand and rolling his eyes.

"Good morning, monsieur. How are you?" returned Beaumarchais with his keen quizzical look,

bowing, a sarcastic smile on his lips. And he continued to descend the stairs swaggeringly, whistling a popular air. The duke, suspicious and jealous, angrily ran up the last steps, his sword swinging against the banisters, almost tore out the bell-pull and flung himself into Mlle. Ménard's apartment, slamming the door behind him. Mlle. Ménard in elegant early morning undress was arranging her hair before the cheval glass. Gudin, who had come with Beaumarchais, made a movement to leave. Surprised at the duke's demeanour he remained. A violent scene ensued. Hat on head he began to yell and stamp his feet. Mlle. Ménard laughed loudly and went on arranging her hair before the glass, assisted by her maid. The duke struck the toilet table a blow with his fist, smashed several toilet bottles, bellowing:

"I'll kill him!"

The maid fled, shrieking. Mlle. Ménard began to sob. Gudin darted forward, but he was a man of little physical strength, and in a trice the duke sent him flying to the other end of the room. The poor fellow picked himself up, and left the house, hurrying in search of Beaumarchais, whose carriage he met in the Rue Dauphine near the Carrefour de Bussy. Waving his stick he signalled to the coachman to pull up his horses—two magnificent animals, the gift of Pâris Duverney—mounted the carriage step and cried: "The duke is looking for you. He means to kill you!"

"He will only kill his own fleas," Beaumarchais answered, laughing. "Thanks all the same. I am

going to the Captainry to hold a sitting and he must wait until I come back."

Meantime the duke seized Mlle. Ménard by the throat, shouting: "You traitor! You have deceived me with that scoundrel!" Then, leaving her half strangled on a sofa, he rushed out without waiting for a reply, made a dash downstairs, and found himself perspiring, storming, face to face with Gudin, the mild and peaceable Gudin, who had returned to see if the duke's carriage was still there, and had just called a hackney coach to take him home.

Seizing Gudin by the arm the duke in a passion shouted:

"You know where he is, you know everything. Well, tell me at once or look out for yourself. I must kill him!"

"But whom, for Heaven's sake?"

"That blackguard Beaumarchais, your friend, monsieur, whom I introduced to Mlle. Ménard. He is now playing me false with her. Besides, you know it, you are his accomplice. Where is he? Come, out with it or I'll run my sword through you." And he shook the bewildered Gudin. The coachman began to lose patience and a crowd collected.

The duke forced Gudin into the hackney coach and bundled in himself, shouting: "Rue de Condé!" Gudin knew that Beaumarchais by this time would be presiding at the Captainry of the Warren of the Louvre. He forbore to utter a word. The coach set off but was held up by the block of traffic, and the crowd could see and hear the duke still shouting and falling on Gudin.

Gudin was one of those naturally quiet persons who once aroused are as the saying goes, like mad sheep. He began to think that the Duke was overdoing it.

"Curse it, will you tell me where that scoundrel is hiding? When I have torn his heart out with my teeth that Ménard slut may become what she will."

"I don't know where my friend Beaumarchais is. And if I did know I certainly should not tell you in your present state."

"Zounds! if you resist me I will strike you. What impertinence!"

"If you strike me, monsieur le Duc, I will strike you back."

"A blow to me!"

The duke started up in the coach, threw himself upon Gudin and seized him by the hair. But as Gudin wore a wig, it came off in his hands before the crowd and the coachman who, hearing Gudin's cries as the noble madman scratched his face, descended from his box.

"Guard! Help!" shouted Gudin.

The crowd laughed uproariously at the comic battle, and the coachman considering he had a right to expect decent behaviour from his fares, told them so in no uncertain language, whereupon the duke, speechless with rage, but vaguely uneasy as to the possible consequences of his outbreak, consented to calm down to a scowl until they reached the Rue de Condé.

Gudin put his wig on again and diffidently strove to calm his irascible companion as they proceeded; but

when the coach pulled up he jumped out and took himself off at the top of his speed. Gudin was a good-natured fellow of peaceable disposition, but perhaps none too courageous, and he put forward an excellent excuse for running away: Beaumarchais's servants knew him well and if they saw the two men together they would not fail to tell the duke, if he asked them, where their master was, whereas if they saw the duke alone in such a towering passion they would doubtless refuse to answer him. It was a clever excuse but it showed Gudin's fear of scandal and the duke's rage rather than his presence of mind to help a friend in an emergency.

The duke, taken aback, raging within himself at this precipitate flight, had to pay Gudin's coachman—he could do no less. Then he banged on Beaumarchais's knocker and the servants frankly told him that he would find their master at the Captainry holding a sitting. He jumped into his own carriage which had followed the hackney coach, drove to the Louvre, and arrived breathless in the courtroom in which Beaumarchais, clad in the insignia of his office, was gravely hearing cases against the game laws.

Still perspiring, fuming, swearing, the noble giant explained with circumlocution to Pierre Augustin, majestic and dignified in his robe, his urgent need of a private conversation.

"M. de Beaumarchais, I have something important to say to you. I beg you to come out for a moment."

"But I can't do that, monsieur le Duc. Will vou be good enough to take a seat?" he replied.

"No, curse it, I must speak to you at once."

He noisily stalked backwards and forwards to the amazement of the associate judges. Beaumarchais thought it well to suspend the sitting and retire with the duke for a moment into a private room. Here the duke gave way to his frenzy, and in the coarse and energetic language of the market place, suiting the gesture to the word, invited Beaumarchais to allow himself to be cut in two on the spot.

"Oh, is that all? You must allow business to come before pleasure, monsieur le Duc," said Beaumarchais, calmly making a movement to return to the court.

The duke seized him by the robe at the door and gasped in his ear, grinding his teeth.

"I will tear your eyes and heart out if you don't come out at once. You coward . . . scoundrel!"

"It wouldn't be safe for you, my dear fellow. Have a little patience, hang it all."

The sitting was resumed. Beaumarchais retained his self-possession. The duke, fuming and fretting, kept looking at his watch, clutching frantically the hilt of his sword, asking everyone: "Will it last much longer?"

At last Beaumarchais adjourned the court. He took off his official robe and joined the duke, still in a volcanic state. Once they were in a carriage he asked him:

"Will you at least tell me what I have done to deserve being run through?"

"No explanations. Let us go and fight at once," he said.

"But . . ."

"No, I tell you. Don't try to get out of it."

"But I've only got my dress sword. At least allow me to go to my house for another."

"We will call at the Comte de Turpin's who will lend you one and act as second."

The Comte de Turpin asked to be excused on the pretext of urgent business. It was now one o'clock and neither the duke nor Beaumarchais had lunched. Beaumarchais magnanimously invited the duke to lunch, intending to have it out and if possible arrange matters on a friendly basis over a well served meal. He could not shake off the painful recollection of his duel twelve years before and wanted to avoid this one. The duke shook his fists and flung out his insults, but by this time they were in the Rue de Condé, the carriage door was opened, and the duke grew silent and seemed ready to submit.

The two men silently mounted the stairs. Beaumarchais ushered the duke into his private room and ordered lunch to be brought in to them. He told his servant to get his sword ready. They remained alone. Beaumarchais took a letter from the table and opened it; the duke snatched it away. Beaumarchais sat down to write; the duke stopped him, pouring forth abuse and bad language. He took him by the tail of his coat, seized his court sword which lay on the desk, though his own was by his side, and made a gesture to run him through, loading him with the vilest insults. . . .

The duke was on one side of the table and Beaumarchais on the other and the position was critical.

Nevertheless, after running round the room, he parried the stroke with his hand, took his enemy round the body, and tried to push him towards the mantelpiece to pull the bell. He managed to ring it, but the duke dug his claws into his face and it was bathed in blood when the servants came. One after another footman, valet, cook, coachman came running up, and succeeded in disarming and holding the madman, but not before he had sprung at Beaumarchais's hair and almost scalped him. Mad with pain Beaumarchais sent a heavy blow with his fist straight into the duke's face.

"Wretch!" the duke cried. "You strike a duke and peer!"

The servants in awe of the "duke and peer" no longer dared to hold him. He shook himself free and shot forward again at Beaumarchais whose clothes were in tatters and face covered with blood. Old M. Caron threw himself between them, but neither his seventy-five years nor the shrieks of Beaumarchais's sisters checked the madman. A lady's maid opened the window and cried out that her master was being murdered. A crowd of idlers flocked round the door and the Commissary of Police was sent for. Meantime the hand to hand fight continued. The servants were unable to separate the combatants, and they gradually drew to the edge of the staircase and fell from top to bottom—bumped and bruised. They picked themselves up and the duke, still swearing, was about to renew the fight when a knock came at the door. He ran to it and saw Gudin standing before him. He seized him

and sent him flying into the house and closed the door. Poor Gudin, with a greenish look about him, trembling all over, remained where the duke's fist sent him. Then drawing his own sword, which he still wore, the duke rushed upon Beaumarchais. Once more he was disarmed but not without difficulty. All the combatants were wounded. The duke made for the kitchen in search of a knife. Beaumarchais ran upstairs to arm himself with one of the fire-irons. In the absence of his adversary the duke sat at the table downstairs and devoured the lunch laid for the Caron family. The servants exchanged a few whispered words as they kept an eye on him.

Another knock came at the door. With his mouth full, dishevelled, his clothes in disorder the duke went to open it, and was confronted by the Commissary of Police. Beaumarchais came downstairs and the Commissary perforce listened at one and the same time to two contradictory accounts of the affray—one from the duke and one from the others. The Commissary took the duke into another room and suavely did his utmost to pacify him as he tore out his hair and bruised his face in his impotent rage. At last he agreed to return home and he did not scruple to have his hair arranged and his clothes put in order by one of the servants whom he had maltreated.

The Commissary made no official report of the facts at the time but subsequently drew up a statement for M. de Sartines, the Lieutenant General of Police. But he dared not make a charge against a peer.

Beaumarchais drafted his version, the duke wrote another of a very different complexion, and Gudin submitted a third.

That same evening Beaumarchais with bandaged head called upon his friend Lopes, formerly house steward to the King. He had promised to read *The Barber of Seville* and it was a successful reading. He gave a spirited account of his epic battle with the Duc de Chaulnes, and ended the evening by singing Spanish seguedillas set to words of his own composition, accompanying himself on the harp.

Three days later the Duc de Chaulnes in the crush room of the Théâtre Français and afterwards in other places, openly proclaimed his refusal to fight a duel with the plebeian Beaumarchais. The Tribunal of the Marshals of France which decided affairs of honour between gentlemen—and Beaumarchais could claim to be considered one—placed Beaumarchais and the duke under guard in their own houses. Then after hearing the evidence of the complainants and witnesses, ordered, on the 19th of February, the Duc de Chaulnes to retire to Vincennes, and informed Beaumarchais that he was no longer under arrest. Vaguely mistrustful of this instance of impartial justice, Beaumarchais called on the Duc de la Vrillière, the Minister of the Royal Household, formerly the Comte de St. Florentin, the very man who had instructed the Academy of Sciences to investigate M. Lepaute's claim to be the "inventor" of a new escapement for watches. The Duke de la Vrillière, a man of narrow mind, had

given special orders for Beaumarchais to be placed under arrest in spite of his protests. Not finding him at home Beaumarchais left a message for him, and drove to M. de Sartines, the Lieutenant General of Police, whom he already knew slightly. M. de Sartines informed him that he was free.

But the Duc de la Vrillière, incensed at the thought that an order of arrest issued by him "in the King's name" had been rescinded "in the King's name," sent Beaumarchais, on the 24th of February, to For l'Evêque. That evening an officer of musketeers appeared at his house, read the warrant for his arrest, and said:

"You have a quarter of an hour to get your bag ready and say good-bye to your family."

Beaumarchais uttered a protest.

"Don't waste time," said the lieutenant.

Two sergeants caught hold of him and bundled him, in spite of his renewed protests, into a carriage waiting outside and off they went! Night was falling when Beaumarchais left the Rue de Condé. And here he was suddenly torn from his family, his *Barber*, his occupations, and his ever-threatening lawsuit with La Blache. Nothing could be done but submit, hoping that his incarceration would be of a short duration. He wrote to the distressful Gudin:

"In virtue of a *lettre sans cachet* called *lettre de cachet* signed by Louis, countersigned by Phelippeaux [de la Vrillière's family name], recommended by de Sartines, executed by Buchot, and suffered by Beau-

marchais, I have been invited to spend a week in a rather cool room furnished with nice window blinds of superior fastenings; in short a place of great security from burglars and not too full of superfluous ornament, in a château standing prettily on the banks of the Seine in Paris, called in days gone by Forum Episcopi. . . . I have been lodged, my friend, since this morning at For l'Evêque in a room without a carpet, at a rent of two thousand one hundred and sixty francs, where I am led to hope that I shall want for nothing except bare necessaries. . . ."

CHAPTER III

"Courage and truth—that's my motto you know."

BEAUMARCHAIS.

MEANTIME the Duc de Chaulnes in his prison continued to bewail the disadvantages of admitting to his mistress's intimacy a friend wittier and handsomer than himself. Mlle. Ménard was in the slough of despair—she was a kind-hearted and gentle little thing—and made up her mind to spend the rest of her days in a convent. The Comte de la Blache and his satellites rubbed their hands with glee: "The thing is not to waste our time, let's get to work at once." The "work" meant taking advantage of Beaumarchais being under lock and key to solicit and canvass attorneys and judge advocates in view of the appeal in Parliament which La Blache was pressing forward with all his power.

But Gudin forewarned Beaumarchais of the manœuvre. For all his spirit, there was but one expedient which would enable him to pursue his case and lessen the injury which the Comte de la Blache was doing him—implore the Duc de la Vrillière's pardon and recover his liberty. At first he asked M.

de Sartines's permission to leave the prison for a few hours daily so as to apply himself to his case. The Duc de la Vrillière refused in a sarcastic letter, and waxing indignant Beaumarchais wrote to M. de Sartines:

"It is now clearly proved that certain persons want me to lose my lawsuit if it can be lost, or is merely doubtful; but I confess to you that I was little prepared for the derisive remark of the Duc de la Vrillière 'to leave the representation of my case to my solicitor,' when he knows as well as I do that solicitors are not allowed to make such representations. Great gods! cannot they ruin an innocent man without laughing in his face. . . . A little more and I should have been told that to be insulted in every possible manner by a man of quality was an impudence on my part!"

At the same time Mlle. Ménard, who was not made for the life of a convent for more than a fortnight, amiably sought to secure Beaumarchais's release. She frequently visited M. de Sartines who did not long remain indifferent to her charms. But M. de Sartines with the best will in the world could do no more than make representations in his turn. In the end circumstances were too strong, and acting on the advice of Gudin who came to see him daily, hoping in this way to achieve success, Beaumarchais with the greatest reluctance wrote a letter to the Duc de la Vrillière:

"21st March, 1773.

"MONSEIGNEUR:

"The terrible affair of the Duc de Chaulnes has grown into an endless series of misfortunes for me, and the

greatest of all is to have incurred your displeasure; but if in spite of the purity of my intentions, the grief which crushes me got the better of my judgment and led me to take steps which may have displeased you, I disavow them at your feet, Monseigneur, and beg you to grant me a generous pardon. . . ."

After humiliating himself to this degree before the paltry vanity of the Duc de la Vrillière was satisfied, he was granted permission next day to leave his prison in order to prosecute his case and interview his judges and other influential persons; but on the express condition of being accompanied by M. Santerre, a police officer, who was not to leave him by a foot's breadth during his peregrinations. Moreover he would have to return to For l'Evêque in the Rue St. Germain l'Auxerrois—it was demolished six years later—for meals and to sleep. His visits were rendered all the more arduous by the very fact of these restrictions.

At last, on the 1st April, 1773—three years to a day after the final settlement of the account with Duverney—on the motion of the Advocate General, the Court took the case into consideration and appointed as judge advocate M. Goëzman, one of the Counsellors of the High Chamber of Parliament, selecting him from the judges entrusted with the case. Beaumarchais had once caught a glimpse of him while interviewing another judge. An ex-Counsellor of the Parliament of Colmar, M. Goëzman was called to Paris in 1765, and Chancellor Maupeou at the time of his hapless reform of Parliament

appointed him a Counsellor of the High Chamber of Parliament.

From the moment of M. Goëzman's appointment as judge advocate in the case, it was indispensable to Beaumarchais to see him and to discuss fully the details of his defence as was the custom among litigants.

On the afternoon of the 1st of April, Beaumarchais called on Goëzman three times without effect, and at length handed the porter a card on which he had written: "Beaumarchais begs M. Goëzman to be kind enough to grant him an interview, and to leave word with the porter fixing the day and hour." He could obtain no answer. And yet on one occasion, while pacing up and down the courtyard outside the porter's lodge, he had caught sight of Goëzman staring at him from behind a raised curtain.

On the following day, guarded as usual by Santerre, Beaumarchais called thrice and spoke to the porter who told him that "Monsieur Goëzman declined to see anyone and it was useless to return." The case was to come up for consideration on Goëzman's report on the 5th of April and time was precious. Next morning therefore about ten o'clock, as soon as Santerre came for him, Beaumarchais hurried to Goëzman's house only to receive the same reply.

What was he to do?

Greatly perplexed and perturbed Beaumarchais decided on his way back to call on Mme. *de* Lépine—everyone was raising himself to noble rank in those days—his young sister formerly called Fanchon.

It was a long cry to the time when the young Carons were wont to "play police courts" in the back-yard of their house in the Rue St. Denis. As Beaumarchais mounted the stairs he could not help thinking that all this was happening in real life and he was no longer acting a part. He entered his sister's flat and sank exhausted in a chair. Lépine, now the owner of a flourishing watchmaking business, and Fanchon were there as well as Gudin and Bertrand d'Airolles, a friend of Lépine, even too close a friend of Mme. Lépine if gossip could be believed. Bertrand d'Airolles, a bachelor of thirty-seven years old with a large circle of friends, was a man of business in a vague way, an unofficial middleman, a "banker" in the Place Dauphine in Paris and a "merchant" in Marseilles. Beaumarchais had occasion to lend him two hundred pistoles which had not yet been repaid.

They began to talk. Beaumarchais, usually so calm and self-possessed, seemed careworn. After placing the exact state of affairs before them he remained silent and motionless in his seat, arms and legs crossed, listening to the company as they discussed and cast about for means of solving the difficulty. Suddenly Bertrand d'Airolles tapped his forehead and in his Provençal accent exclaimed:

"Hang it all, there's Le Jeay! It's quite easy. I'll go and see him and the thing's done. Wait, I'll go now and come back here."

Even now he had put on his shovel hat and with a springy step was making ready to go. He was a long,

lank, gaunt, slouching fellow with a ceremonious air, a shifty eye, a gaping mouth.

Beaumarchais wanted to hear more.

"Gently, young man, not so fast. It's not so easy as borrowing two hundred pistoles you know. Let's have your plan of campaign."

"Well, here it is. It's amazingly simple. Edme Jean Baptiste Le Jeay, the bookseller, publishes and sells secretly for the Duc d'Aiguillon and Chancellor Maupeou, pamphlets written by Counsellor Goëzman so that Le Jeay, who is a great friend of mine, knows Counsellor Goëzman and better still his wife. She is his second wife; young and pretty, very coquettish and extravagant, and she often calls on him to collect her husband's 'author's fees' and gossip with Mme. Le Jeay when she is in and listen to the bookseller's declarations when she is out. I once saw her at Le Jeay's. She was explaining to him, the coquette, how impossible it was to live decently on her husband's salary, but nevertheless they managed to live, she said, for they knew 'the art of plucking the fowl without making it cry out.' I feel sure, M. de Beaumarchais, that you will not allow yourself to be plucked more than is absolutely necessary —it won't ruin you—and you won't cry out."

"Not a bit of it. I decline to pay anything at all. Last year I won my case without paying or soliciting Maître Dufour. This year in view of the new Parliament, my imprisonment in For l'Evêque, the host of henchman in the service of La Blache who pays for everything and will bribe everybody to ruin me though

my case is impregnable, I need at least one interview with Counsellor Goëzman to explain if needs be what might otherwise take him in. That's perfectly natural. He shuts his door against me. He denies himself to me. He must see me and it is not for me to bribe him. . . .

"I quite understand now—there is an entrance fee. Well, I must win this appeal just as I won the case last year. If I lose it, it will be because La Blache has forced open the door and ensured victory, by a shower of louis. I shall lodge a complaint, and we will see who is to be plucked. . . . Bertrand, my friend, you can take off your hat and sit down again. I must go. They are waiting lunch for me at For l'Evêque. See you again soon."

When he returned two hours later Bertrand d' Airolles, Lépine and his wife, and then Gudin did their utmost to make him realise the danger he was running, albeit he was bent on this uncompromising attitude by the consciousness of the justice of his case and his irritation against Goëzman: "La Blache was very likely in ignorance of the situation," they argued, "nor had he perhaps been able, any more than Beaumarchais, to enter into relations with Goëzman for lack of information which Beaumarchais now possessed. To hold aloof would mean sacrificing his fortune and perhaps his future for the sake of say fifteen or twenty louis. There was no time to lose, and he ought at least to let Bertrand d'Airolles go to Le Jeay and pick up what information he could so as to judge how matters stood."

Beaumarchais still wavered, dissatisfied and despondent. However, Bertrand d'Airolles strode off. He soon returned.

"It will cost you one hundred louis," he said, scratching his ear.

Beaumarchais taken aback, protested, argued, would not hear of it. Once again they prevailed on him to bow to the inevitable. He did not possess the ready money. Two thousand four hundred francs for the privilege of an interview with a judge was no small sum in those days.

Gudin went to see the Prince de Conti with a line from Beaumarchais and brought back the hundred louis. Meantime Beaumarchais had to return to For l'Evêque. Mme. Lépine, of a thrifty disposition, wanted to offer fifty louis only and asked Bertrand d'Airolles to ascertain if that amount would not suffice. D'Airolles soon returned with Le Jeay. He seemed a decent, harmless sort of man. He declared that no interview could be had for fifty louis, that Mme. Goëzman would only be upset by the suggestion, and that the hundred louis demanded by her would have to be forthcoming. Mme. Lépine could not choose but submit.

Bertrand d'Airolles, accompanied by Le Jeay, took a hackney coach and drove to Mme. Goëzman's house. D'Airolles remained outside. Le Jeay received an assurance from her that Beaumarchais would be able to see her husband, the Counsellor, that same evening. On his side, a mutual friend of Goëzman and Beau-

marchais whom the latter met on returning to the Forum Episcopi, called twice at Goëzman's house to obtain from M. Goëzman a confirmation of the promised interview. This very obliging friend was François Louis Claude Marin, police censor, and a journalist on the *Gazette de France*. *Eugénie*, *The Two Friends* and *The Barber of Seville* had in turn been submitted to his censorship—the unfortunate Barber was still waiting to be performed. Another court friend of long standing, M. de la Châtaigneraie, to whom Beaumarchais had entrusted his affairs while in Spain, also called on Goëzman to see which way the wind blew and to pave the way for the interview.

On returning with Le Jeay, Bertrand d'Airolles, proud of his success, called first on Mme. Lépine to report progress, and about seven o'clock in the evening went on with a letter to For l'Evêque. Naturally anxious, Beaumarchais received him with open arms.

"Well?"

"Well, it's fixed anyway. Go to-night to M. Goëzman. You will be told he is out."

"What then?"

"Ask for Mme. Goëzman's servant and give him this letter which tells her you have come for the promised interview, and you will be certain of being received."

Beaumarchais had to apply for a special permit to leave his prison after supper but it was granted. He betook himself first, guarded of course by Santerre, to M. Falconet, his lawyer, and asked him to accompany

him. Together they arrived at M. Goëzman's door in Quay St. Paul, Isle St. Louis, about nine o'clock. They rapped at the knocker, gave the letter to the servant, and were almost at once shown in. Beaumarchais alone went into the study.

Counsellor Goëzman was a bearded man of forty-three with a face like a wild boar and a squint, and walked with his left shoulder thrust forward. Every now and again he gave a grin without apparent reason. Beaumarchais, worn out by so much excitement, was not favourably impressed by him. The interview did not last long. M. Goëzman absently turned over the documents and asked one or two questions on entirely insignificant points. Beaumarchais left the study in wonder at the Counsellor that had fallen to his lot and uneasy in his mind over the outcome of it all.

Next day he told Bertrand d'Airolles to convey his impressions to Mme. Goëzman. He was given to understand that there was nothing to cause anxiety in all this, and by adopting the same methods he could have a second interview if he desired it, and would be able to explain fully to M. Goëzman his point of view. It was with great difficulty that Beaumarchais's friends persuaded him to submit to a second interview for which he would have to pay a second bribe. With no hope of borrowing another hundred louis, he offered his watch instead—the last made by himself—a magnificent repeater studded with diamonds at the instance of Pâris Duverney.

The "present" was passed over to Le Jeay, accepted

by the beautiful Mme. Goëzman, and the interview promised on condition that an additional sum of fifteen louis were paid ostensibly for the secretary. Beaumarchais was indignant and flatly refused inasmuch as this new request came as a surprise to him for he had sent the secretary ten louis the evening before through M. de la Châtaigneraie and he had accepted them only after making a great fuss, declaring that no work in connection with the case had been given him to do.

It was with a gesture of ill-humour that at last he threw the fifteen louis on the card table in Mme. Lépine's drawing room. Bertrand d'Airolles picked the money up in his huge hand, and hurried off to Le Jeay who handed it over to Mme. Goëzman. On the strength of this payment the interview was promised for seven o'clock on Sunday evening. At the appointed hour Beaumarchais banged repeatedly on the knocker, and shouted for the porter through the wicket-gate but without avail. He returned to For l'Evêque blazing with rage.

Late that night Le Jeay made a fresh journey to Mme. Goëzman's house. She protested that no blame could be attached to her, and invited Beaumarchais to call again next morning—the day on which the report was to be made—and added that if no interview were granted his "presents" would be returned.

Beaumarchais looked upon this announcement as of ill-omen. The truth was that the Comte de la Blache—he did not know it of course, but suspected it—had called at the Goëzmans' on the Sunday morning, a fact

which the porter's list of visitors proved, and offered the Counsellor a substantial sum which was accepted. Moreover Goëzman had resolved to return Beaumarchais's "presents" after the case had been given against him so as to prevent "the plucked fowl from crying out."

On Monday morning Beaumarchais was again refused admittance at Goëzman's house in spite of the promises of the evening before. He was reduced to ask the porter's permission to enter his lodge and here he drafted on three large sheets of paper the points which he intended to lay before M. Goëzman by word of mouth. And sick at heart, his mind in revolt, he returned to For l'Evêque after the porter, to whom he had given a couple of écus, was good enough to promise him to take his written statement at once to his master.

About midday Beaumarchais learnt that the judges of the Maupeou Parliament, acting on Counsellor Goëzman's report, had reversed the decision of the lower Court given in 1772; he had lost his case. The actual judgment and the issue of the award were deferred for three weeks. He was condemned to pay fifty-six thousand three hundred francs, a debt which the statement of accounts had annulled, the interest on the debt from 1770, and the costs of the action. It meant ruin, annihilation. Utterly prostrated by the catastrophe, he wrote to M. de Sartines on the 9th of April:

"My courage is exhausted. The current rumour is that I am entirely sacrificed; my credit shaken, my

affairs in ruin; my family of whom I am the father and support in desolation. Monsieur, I have unostentatiously done good throughout my life (this is not quite true) and I have always been torn to pieces by my enemies. If my home life were known to you, you would see that as a good son, good brother, good husband and useful citizen I have gathered nothing but blessings around me; while in public I have been shamelessly slandered . . . It is clear to demonstration that my imprisonment costs me one hundred thousand francs. The substance, the form, in this iniquitous judgment makes me shudder. . . . I have sufficient strength to bear my own misfortunes; I have no strength to withstand the tears of my worthy father, who is seventy-five years old and dying from grief at the abject condition into which I have fallen; I have none against the grief of my sisters and nieces who are already feeling the terror of the poverty that hangs over them owing to the state in which my imprisonment has thrown me, and the disorder into which it has plunged my affairs. . . . The vitiated atmosphere of my prison is destroying my miserable health. . . ."

Next day La Blache began to seize Beaumarchais's property. His furniture was taken away piecemeal. The house itself now belonged by rights to La Blache though Beaumarchais's family continued to live in it in straitened circumstances.

On the evening of the day when judgment was pronounced, Bertrand d'Airolles handed back the

hundred louis and the watch to Mme. Lépine. He had received them from Le Jeay to whom Mme. Goëzman had returned them, but so far as the fifteen louis were concerned it seemed to her, she said, that they in any case should remain the property of the secretary. Beaumarchais took back the hundred louis and the watch, but the secretary's conduct was an enigma to him. Why had this man, honest to the point of accepting only with reluctance the gift of ten louis, demanded fifteen louis to which he was not entitled? Why had he kept them though Beaumarchais had lost his case, and Mme. Goëzman, apparently honest in her shabby transactions, had faithfully returned the hundred louis and the watch! He asked M. de la Châtaigneraie to interrogate the sphinx. His old friend soon discovered that the secretary had neither solicited nor received nor was he keeping the fifteen louis.

The whole thing was clear. Fifteen louis were not a negligible sum to Mme. Goëzman whose financial transactions stood revealed in a peculiarly dishonourable light. In the circumstances, Beaumarchais on the 25th of April after asking Bertrand d'Airolles to get the money from Le Jeay, whom he had never met, wrote a careful letter to Mme. Goëzman from For l'Evêque in which the Duc de la Vrillière still kept him, demanding the return of the fifteen louis. Le Jeay had not got them. Mme. Goëzman said the secretary was keeping them. And the secretary declared that he had not seen them.

BEAUMARCHAIS

After the painting by Sarazin

Meantime, on the 8th of May, Beaumarchais was released from For l'Evêque after over two months' unjust imprisonment. He had been obliged to give up his house. His father, a widower for the second time, was living in the house of an old lady, the widow of a watchmaker he had known. Julie entered a convent as a free boarder. His two sisters from Spain joined a convent in Picardy permanently. Soon after this Mme. de Miron, his youngest sister, passed away in her thirty-third year. Beaumarchais was beset on all sides by the heavy hand of care and sorrow. . . .

Mme. Goëzman made no reply to Beaumarchais's letter. Then one day she sent for Le Jeay and poured on him such a shower of reproaches and remonstrances that she convinced him in his simplicity that Beaumarchais was claiming the hundred louis and the watch. Le Jeay, taking fright at the suspicion hanging over him, straightway hurried to Mme. Lépine, weeping and wailing, almost out of his mind:

"Mme. Goëzman tells me she will appeal to the Duc d'Aiguillon and have me and M. de Beaumarchais sent to prison. M. de Beaumarchais has written to her claiming the hundred louis and the watch though I gave them back. Is it not a shame? I feel I shall go mad with all this business!"

Fortunately Mme. Lépine's doctor was in the house. In vain they tried to tell the hapless Le Jeay that Mme. Goëzman was playing upon his credulity. They had to send to Beaumarchais for the copy of his letter. Not before he had seen and read it was he convinced

that the only question at issue was the fifteen louis appropriated by Mme. Goëzman.

Apoplectic, his eyes starting from his head, Le Jeay left them declaring his intention to give her a piece of his mind. He was not seen again for some time.

As a matter of fact he was shown up to M. Goëzman's study. Le Jeay's frenzy subsided at the sight of the malignant expression on the Counsellor's face. Trembling with fear he stood twisting his hat between his benumbed fingers. The day was closing in. Goëzman lit a candle on his desk and with folded arms, grinding his teeth, strode up to Le Jeay in the semi-darkness. With wide-open terrified eyes the poor bookseller fell on his knees.

"You wretched creature! I'll have you thrown into the lowest dungeon for the rest of your life if you worry me and my wife again with your fifteen louis. As to that scoundrel Beaumarchais, leave him to me, do you hear? Get up, you ass, and make a copy of what is written on this paper and sign it at once, or I'll have you sent to the gallows as a thief. I am not a Counsellor of the High Chamber of Parliament of Paris to allow myself to be plagued by a Beaumarchais or a Le Jeay, take my word for it. Come, stir yourself and get to work!"

Seizing Le Jeay, more dead than alive, by the arm he forced him into a seat at the desk, put a newly cut quill pen in his hand, and began to dictate in a voice which in the twilight seemed to strike terror:

"I the undersigned Edme Jean Baptiste Le Jeay,

bookseller, at the sign of the Grand Corneille, Rue St. Jacques, Paris, declare in the interests of truth . . ."

At midnight Le Jeay, obsessed by the day's work, stole furtively home. He had signed, under duress, an affidavit the substance of which was that yielding to the entreaties of a friend of Beaumarchais, he had accepted one hundred louis and a watch set with diamonds, and weakly offered them, as he was requested to do, to Mme. Goëzman with the object of corrupting the integrity of her husband the judge, but that Mme. Goëzman had "unhesitatingly and with indignation" rejected the proposal. No mention, of course, was made of the fifteen louis which Mme. Goëzman still kept in her drawer.

Next day, the 1st of June, Goëzman equipped with the statement called on the Duc de la Vrillière and M. de Sartines, showed it to them, retailed its contents, and protested against Beaumarchais's slanders and attempts at bribery.

It was the beginning of a public scandal.

Beaumarchais, forewarned of these tactics, refused at first to believe them, but in face of the evidence he wrote a letter to the Presiding Judge of the Parliament stating the facts and his readiness to defend himself with all his strength if he were attacked in this dishonourable fashion. Goëzman persisted in his course, interviewed every person in office, and at last denounced Beaumarchais to the Parliament as a calumniator and corrupter of justice.

A preliminary investigation and subpœna of wit-

nesses followed. Le Jeay began to lose his head. He went to a lawyer, unburdened himself, and was advised to tell the truth. Goëzman learned of this change of front and sent for Le Jeay and his wife. He got out of them to begin with the draft of Le Jeay's statement—it was in his handwriting—resorted to blackmail, reproaches, threats and finally entered into a parley with them. He tried to persuade Le Jeay to take a trip to Holland at his expense until he had secretly arranged the matter. Mme. Le Jeay refused, and took her husband away. Beaumarchais denounced the attempt to the Presiding Judge of the Parliament, and Le Jeay was summoned to give evidence at the Record office. He told the story of Goëzman's manœuvres. Mme. Goëzman also gave evidence but professed to know nothing. The inquiry was concluded and the Commissioner, M. Doé de Combault, drew up his report.

The Courts issued a writ of arrest against Le Jeay and ordered Bertrand d'Airolles and Beaumarchais to place themselves at the disposal of the authorities. Mme. Goëzman was cited as a witness. Her husband, doubtless in agreement with her, applied for an order of arrest against her and sent her to a convent. He sought to throw her over, to repudiate her in the eyes of the public, with a view to avert the suspicion which he knew weighed as heavily upon himself as upon her.

The inquiry pursued its course. Le Jeay was brought up from the Conciergerie Prison on the 11th of July and again on the 22nd, and then set at liberty.

He was examined once more on the 20th of August. Bertrand d'Airolles gave evidence on the 21st of July, and again a month later. Beaumarchais's evidence was taken on the 25th of July and was followed by that of Gabrielle Julie Jamart Goëzman.

The case was complicated by the intervention of busybodies, outsiders, mutual acquaintances of Beaumarchais and Le Jeay or Goëzman who blundered a good deal, gave evidence at random, and by their lack of intelligence or credulity caused Beaumarchais the worst vexation. There was d'Arnoud Baculard, a sanctimonious and funereal literary man, whom Goëzman had succeeded in enlisting among his supporters; there was the intriguing Marin who on the plea of seeking to discover a basis of understanding between the two parties, made still further mischief, fell out with Beaumarchais, and added fuel to the flames by inducing Bertrand d'Airolles to retract his evidence and take Goëzman's side. In short by September there was a general wrangle. And yet it was at this time that Beaumarchais reached the first step in the second judgment in the La Blache case.

CHAPTER IV

"I haste to laugh at everything lest I should be forced to weep at everything."

The Barber of Seville.

BEAUMARCHAIS was at last examined and confronted with Mme. Goëzman, the beautiful Gabrielle as he called her among his friends. M. Goëzman also passed to the witnesses' side of the bar after sitting for so long on the judge's bench. The Court consisted of M. Chazal, Judge, and M. Frémin, Registrar. Santerre, the police officer, and Maître Falconet had already been called as witnesses and withstood the assault of Mme. Goëzman, who denied their evidence.

The Registrar, a serious and austere but kindly man in spectacles, strove to understand the case, but the twitching of his long grey mustache showed that never before had he encountered so strange a witness as the beautiful Gabrielle. When at the end of each sitting he read out aloud and observed the series of inconsistencies in her evidence, he shook his head in helpless astonishment at having taken down so many contradictory absurdities. And Mme. Goëzman, who was indeed a very pretty woman, pouted as she realised that she was floundering from one slip of the tongue

to another in an inextricable maze in which in the end she reduced her husband's efforts to naught despite the coaching he had given her before each sitting.

When Beaumarchais's turn came the scene grew highly entertaining and M. de Chazal spent some pleasant moments during the two encounters of four hours each between Beaumarchais and Mme. Goëzman. "M. Caron" was witty and more than ever ironically polite. After the witnesses were sworn and the usual preliminaries were over M. Chazal asked if they knew each other:

"Speaking for myself I neither know him nor wish to know him," said Mme. Goëzman.

"Nor have I the honour of knowing her," said Beaumarchais, "but after seeing her I cannot help expressing an entirely different wish from hers."

Mme. Goëzman was next asked to state if there was anything she had to urge against him.

"Put down that I accuse him of being my chief enemy and of having the reputation throughout Paris of an atrocious man."

The same question was put to Beaumarchais:

"I have nothing to say against her, not even against the little irritation by which she is influenced at the present moment, but I greatly regret that my first opportunity of offering her my compliments should be at a criminal trial. As to my atrocious character, I hope to prove to her by the moderation of my answers and my respectful demeanour that her solicitor has misinformed her. . . ."

The Registrar read out the evidence. Beaumarchais and Mme. Goëzman signed their names at the bottom of each page. His signature, at first a little shaky, grew firmer from page to page, while Mme. Goëzman wrote in a sprawling, clumsy, distorted hand. The Judge asked her if she had any observations to make on what had been read out:

"Well, no. What would you expect me to say to all this stuff and nonsense? Monsieur must have a great deal of time to waste to write down such twaddle."

"Make your statement," said M. de Chazal.

"But on what subject? . . . I don't see. . . . Ah, put down that generally speaking Monsieur's answers are false or have been suggested to him."

"Suggested, I say! Why this is serious. By whom?" said Beaumarchais. "You have learnt your lesson all wrong, madame. You must have been told to say that I suggested my replies to others. But let's pass on. Have you nothing particular to say about the letter which I had the honour to write to you and which obtained for me an interview with M. Goëzman?"

"Certainly. Put down . . . wait a moment . . . Put down that as to the alleged interview . . . the alleged interview . . . alleged against all the other evidence. . . ."

Mme. Goëzman was so long in racking her brains that M. de Chazal interposed:

"Now, madame, what do you mean by the alleged interview?"

"I mean that I never interfere in my husband's

business or interviews but confine myself to my household duties, and if monsieur gave a letter to my footman it was only an additional act of wickedness on his part. I will maintain that against the whole world."

The case went on:

"If it is true that monsieur delivered a letter at my house to which of my servants did he give it?"

"To a young fair-haired man who said he was your footman, madame."

"Ah, that's a nice contradiction. Put down that monsieur handed his letter to a fair-haired man. My footman is not fair-haired; he has light auburn hair. And if it was my footman what livery was he wearing?"

"I was not aware that you had a special livery, madame."

"Put down, put down please, that monsieur who spoke to my footman does not know that I have a livery whereas I have two—one for summer and one for winter."

"Madame, I have so little intention of disputing your two liveries for summer and winter that I thought the footman was wearing a spring morning jacket for it was the 3rd of April. Forgive me if I failed to make my meaning clear."

Next day Mme. Goëzman kept the Court waiting. She came at four o'clock in the afternoon instead of ten o'clock in the morning, but doubtless she had her household duties to perform that day. The Court waited for her. The subject of the fifteen louis came up:

"I declare positively and without equivocation that Le Jeay never spoke to me about these fifteen louis and never gave them to me," said Mme. Goëzman.

"Let me point out, madame, that it would be more meritorious to say: 'I refused them' than to maintain . . . against the whole world . . . that you know nothing about the money."

"I do maintain that nothing was ever said to me about this money. Is it not against common sense that anybody would have offered fifteen louis to a woman in my position, who refused a hundred louis the day before . . ."

"To what day do you refer, madame?"

"Well, of course, the day before . . ."

She stopped short and bit her lip.

"The day before the day on which no one spoke to you about these fifteen louis—is that not so?"

The beautiful Gabrielle was raging within herself. The sitting continued in the same strain and with similar episodes until eight o'clock that night.

Beaumarchais recognised that he had a hard nut to crack and Gudin, his junior by four years but a man of excellent good sense, was also fully aware of it. Grouped round him spontaneously in his support were also Miron, his brother-in-law, a man of wit and literary tastes; Gardance, the family doctor, like Marin a Provençal, and Bertrand; Falconet, his young and able lawyer; and each one helped him in his own way. Beaumarchais was a ruined man for the time being, and the Prince de Conti put his purse at his command.

He and the Prince were almost always together, discussing the position, working to ensure the success of the good cause. Sometimes Julie was present—Julie still unmarried, a very clever woman utterly devoted to her brother, so good-hearted in her eyes, so ready to do a service, so strongly attached to his family and friends, so generous to those in need, and so greatly slandered and vilified and envied by a few men seeking to stir up opinion against him.

Public opinion during the last few years had become the great dispenser of awards and punishments. It had grown conscious of itself, and its powers, its fearlessness increased daily. It was public opinion that applauded or condemned the play of the day, and the journalists in their sheets confined themselves merely to amplifying its judgment. It made great cases in the courts its own business and approved or impugned judicial decisions. Lampoons, polemics, judicial memorials, pleadings, news pamphlets abounded at this time and were sent the rounds secretly, often printed abroad and smuggled into the country and sometimes disseminated by influential persons. In general these lucubrations were thrown into the balance of public opinion by writers called "publicists" though nearly always anonymous. It was in the balance of public opinion that the Goëzman case was to be weighed. A succession of pamphlets and memorials, violent, bitter, witty, sarcastic, slanderous in turn according to the author and the circumstances, provided the munitions for the battle.

Beaumarchais, always ready to take the stage, thought out and drew up unaided a Memorial, submitted it for approval to one or two of the few lawyers supporting and helping him in legal matters, and issued it to the public on the 5th of September, 1773. It was a revelation. How much more like himself he was in it than in the two tearful dramas upon which hitherto his mediocre reputation as an author was built! Full of wit, of literary quality, of consistent interest throughout despite the dryness of the subject, "this Memorial put together in a masterly manner was greeted with lively interest." Such was the view of even malevolent persons of whom there were not a few, especially among journalists and writers of memoirs.

After setting forth the facts, Beaumarchais passed to certain reflections:

"What! Does anyone go so far as to imagine that I could have bought M. Goëzman's support for a paltry sum of fifty louis? To slander the suitor is to throw discredit on the judge. Had I entertained the culpable intention of corrupting my judge in a case whose loss will cost me at least fifty thousand écus, so far from haggling over the price of interviews which I could not do without, would not I have simply said to someone: 'Go and assure M. Goëzman that five hundred louis, a thousand louis, are at his disposal, in the hands of such and such a solicitor, if he will arrange for me to win my suit.' We all know that such negotiations are invariably opened by a bold and striking proposal.

The suborned wants but one thing, makes use of but one moment, says but one word and concludes the bargain or is thrown out of the window: that is the procedure. . . .

"But it may be objected that to pay one hundred louis for an interview was to pay a very large sum. Assuredly it was a very large sum; and my discussions and the efforts of my sister to offer less, sufficiently prove that we shared your opinion. But if you reflect that fifty louis were not enough to obtain the first interview, and that a watch worth a thousand écus with fifteen louis on top of that, failed to procure me a second interview, you will admit that what to-day seems to you to have been dearly bought did not then appear to be paid for at a sufficiently high price. . . . Do me therefore at least the justice that you would demand from me, and do not suppose that I had any intention of corrupting a judge since everything goes to support the evidence that I merely submitted to the stern necessity of paying for interviews essential to me."

The Memorial was sold everywhere and was read aloud in the "Caveau," the popular café of those days. Beaumarchais juggled with the fifteen louis, and like Punch struck out again and again, right and left, in front and behind, and at the finish showed the public his hands and tongue: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have nothing up my sleeve. These are not the hands of a briber, nor is this the tongue of a slanderer"; and his lawyer-advisers, Maître Doé de Combault—he had

drawn up a report on the case—and Maître Malbeste, both corroborated their client in act, word and deed.

The public was divided into two camps, and all the more keenly excited as the case seemed to involve political interests beyond the range of a particular lawsuit. On one side or other in this dispute over fifteen louis in which M. Goëzman, a judge of the Maupeou Parliament, was himself on trial, were ranged the supporters of the old Parliament and those of the new. The whole question of Chancellor Maupeou's reform of Parliament was at stake. Thus Beaumarchais's Memorial created a stir, and on the 15th of September he published a second edition which was taken up as eagerly as the first.

On the 18th of October the sanctimonious Baculard issued a Memorial of fifteen pages, wordy and high-flown to a degree, in which he claimed damages for Beaumarchais's attacks on him, declaring—the saintly man!—his intention of presenting such damages to religious charities. He wanted "Caron's libel" suppressed and thus characterised the said Caron:

"I have abandoned the ignominy and torment of intrigue to these men of to-day, these lost souls who throw themselves upon every path, and march forward to fortune *per famam et populum;* who, inured to slander and scandal, exert themselves in every way to make a sensation which is very different from reputation; whose effrontery shrinks from nothing, whom one cannot confound because their audacity is proof against ridicule and insult, who in a word have reached the

summit of their hopes when they have managed to strut upon the stage of the world. . . ."

Such was his jargon! And how clumsy, heavy, vague was the picture, unredeemed even by the merit of accuracy!

Marin came next with his Memorial. On the 18th of November Beaumarchais issued a Supplement. He reproduced the evidence given when he was confronted with Mme. Goëzman and ended this part with the words: "An ingenuous woman was announced to me and I was introduced to a German publicist!" And then turning his attention to Goëzman he showed that he was the soul of the conspiracy. Discussing the genuineness of Le Jeay's affidavit he wrote:

"Do you really believe that he did not of set purpose begin his affidavit with the sentence: 'I declare that Bertrand and Beaumarchais . . .'? When I saw our two names thus stripped of the least mark of courtesy, when I thought of this method of expression —Bertrand, Beaumarchais, Lafleur, Larose—I recognised the flowing style of a man in a superior position to the persons whom he desired to honour with his ill-usage. I felt that the hand of the very familiar bookseller was used merely as a cat's paw, and his handwriting was but the mask of the Counsellor. Never would Le Jeay, the most unassuming of men, have treated with such freedom M. Bertrand d'Airolles who has often assisted him with his influence, still less would he have thus treated lowly me for I have not the honour of his acquaintance."

The Supplement had an equally great success.

A week later the foolish Bertrand d'Airolles, who had absolutely turned his coat, issued a Memorial in which he fell foul of Beaumarchais and his friends. Two days later Mme. Goëzman published her Memorial—laborious, vapid and violent. Her husband had written it almost entirely, and it abounded in legal phraseology, Latin quotations, extracts from laws.

On the 3rd of December it was Marin's turn. His Memorial was perhaps the most dangerous of all. A publicist in the worst sense of the term, fawning on the great in office, secretly connected with the police, insinuating and malicious, he grovelled and by his omissions and suppressions which he endeavoured to make suggestive or revolting to the reader, revealed himself as an insidious and treacherous enemy and consequently to be feared. Marin rather prided himself on his oriental learning and began his Memorial with a quotation from Saadi, the Persian poet: "Give not thy rice to the serpent for the serpent will sting thee."

Less than a fortnight later Mme. Goëzman published an addition to her Memorial in answer to Beaumarchais's Supplement.

Affecting the character of a heroine and a lover of justice Mme. Goëzman made charges; she made charges of many atrocities against Beaumarchais and steadily set them out in due order. Readers found in her Memorial *first atrocity*, *second atrocity*, *third atrocity* and so forth. Society grew more than ever breath-

lessly interested in the amazing case, and even the Memorials of Beaumarchais's enemies were read though only for the facts in them. Ill written, pedantic, prolix, shamefully slanderous alike, they were wearisome and did not bear reading.

On the 20th of December, four days after the publication of Mme. Goëzman's Addition, Beaumarchais's third Memorial appeared. It was of greater import than the preceding Memorials, and like them in universal request.

Turning to the scribblers who had attacked him, he wrote:

"Must I to satisfy you be like Marin serious on absurd subjects and absurd on serious subjects—Marin who instead of giving his rice to the serpent, takes its skin, envelops himself in it, and crawls with as much ease as if he had never done anything else in his life?

"Would you have me in the voice of a sexton, like the vacillating Bertrand d'Airolles annotate the *Introbo* and assume with him the tone of the Psalmist to end by singing the praises of Marin after discriminating between his interests and those of the journalist in his epigraph: *Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam . . . ab homine iniquo? . . .*

"Would you have me show an avidity, a blind and revolting hatred, to imitate the example of the Comte de la Blache who follows you everywhere, you, M. Goëzman, supports you unwaveringly, writes to you from all manner of places and whom we may rightly call a man of letters?

"Would it be becoming in me to soar in inflated language to the heavens, sound the depths, cross Hades, only to end like M. d'Arnaud knowing neither what I said nor what I did nor what I wanted? . . ."

What a man and what an advocate he was! He recapitulated the case of La Blache, the begetter of the whole mischief, and attacked Goëzman in his quality as judge-advocate. He put two questions which he said "contained the gist of the matter." First, was the settlement of accounts in the deed of the 1st of April, 1770, a final transaction or simply a preliminary statement? Second, was the settlement of accounts a genuine or forged settlement? Then after answering these two questions with corroborating evidence, he returned to the secondary characters in the drama and gave each one his due: "Your turn, M. Baculard!"

He began with "d'Arnaud Baculard who never said what he meant and never did what he wanted to do. I need but one example of this: '*Yes, I was on foot and I met M. Caron in his carriage, in the Rue de Condé, in his carriage.*'

"*In his carriage* you repeat with a large note of admiration! Who would not think after the sorrowful 'Yes I was on foot' and the large note of admiration which runs after my carriage that you were the personification of envy? But I who know you to be a good sort of man am aware that this sentence . . . does not mean that you were sorry to see me in my carriage, but only sorry that I did not see you in yours. . . .

"But console yourself; the carriage in which I was riding was no longer mine when you saw me in it. The Comte de La Blache had caused it to be seized with all the rest of my property; men entitled to carry arms fitted with a lance, wearing blue coats, shoulder belts, and muskets of menacing aspect, were keeping their eyes on it at my house, as well as on the whole of my furniture while drinking my wine; and in order to cause you in spite of myself the mortification of seeing me *in my carriage*, I had been obliged on that day to undergo that of asking the sheriff's officers with my hat in one hand and a silver coin in the other, permission to make use of it, which, if you will allow me to say so, I did every morning. And whilst I am now addressing you with so much composure the same distress still exists in my house. . . .

"Forgive me if I have not answered, in a letter addressed to yourself alone, all the insults in your Memorial; forgive me if after seeing you 'measure in my heart the depths of hell' and hearing you cry out: '*Thou sleepest Jupiter; of what use then are thy thunderbolts*,' I have replied but lightly to so much bombast; forgive me, you were once a schoolboy no doubt, and you know that the best filled balloon only requires the prick of a pin. . . .

"Your turn, M. Marin! . . . What does your Memorial amount to? It amounts to this: You were not M. Goëzman's friend, you were mine. These are assertions; it remains to discuss the evidence."

And by a succession of jogs to Marin's memory each

one beginning, "If you were not his friend why did you tell me this, why did you do this?" Beaumarchais convicted him of lying and exposed his deceit.

"Your turn, M. Bertrand! . . . Have you read the long Memorial besprinkled with opium and asafœtida which has been circulated in your name? I will not speak of its style, because that is a thing which matters least to you and me for neither of us wrote it. I have done no more than skim through it because one is assailed by an indefinable odour, unsavoury, brackish and *marine* which renders it utterly repulsive to the taste. But as it has appeared under your name I will reply to it as though it were written by you. It is not always easy with your Provençal goods to distinguish the tradesman's invoice from that which is presented to the buyer. . . ." (Marin's native place was La Ciotat and Bertrand's Marseilles.)

Then came Goëzman's turn. Beaumarchais denounced him as the forger of a certificate of baptism in which he figured as the godfather of a child, brought up at his expense, though the relationship was probably much nearer. . . . With a false name and a false address he had rid himself of the child. Fortunately Beaumarchais was informed of the facts and did not fail to whitewash himself while blackening the character of his enemy. As a result of this disclosure an inquiry was held which confirmed Beaumarchais's charges and a decree of "personal suspension" was at once issued against Counsellor Goëzman.

Early in 1774 Marin presented a strictly legal peti-

tion drawn up by his lawyer and therefore unobjectionable in tone. Beaumarchais had covered him with so much ridicule that he abandoned any attempt to answer him.

On the 9th of January, 1774, *Eugénie* was revived at the Théâtre Français. Since Beaumarchais was the lion of the day the success was great. A phrase in which allusion was made to a lawsuit and a judge gave rise to boisterous innuendoes; and when the author appeared in the crush-room during the interval he was loudly cheered and escorted in triumph to his box. Meantime the popular theatres on the Boulevards and those of the Fairs, and even the Italian players, lost no opportunity of flinging a jesting allusion at the *marine* monster and other similar animals, and the audience shouted with glee.

It was a little too much for Marin's nerves.

CHAPTER V

"Not being able to degrade the mind, they seek their revenge by persecuting it."—*The Marriage of Figaro.*

THE investigation proceeded apace and judgment could not be long delayed. Indeed Beaumarchais, more than ever anxious to win the suffrage of the public, strained every nerve, during a short respite, to secure the production of *The Barber of Seville.* A licence for its performance signed by Marin himself and Sartines had been granted a year before. But Sartines had received new orders. While Beaumarchais was conducting the rehearsals at the Théâtre Français a Commissary of Police appeared on the stage where author and manager stood, and with due ceremony handed each a document: the play was prohibited by decree of superior authority.

Beaumarchais turned pale, crumpled up the paper and said to the manager: "Go on with the rehearsals. I shall be back soon." He hastened in search of Sartines.

Sartines was a shrewd, agreeable, even attractive man of much the same age as Beaumarchais, a hard worker and scholar but fickle and inconsistent. Beaumarchais amused and interested him. He had a sneak-

ing admiration for him not unmingled with a shade of contempt just as one may admire a very clever being too ready to exert his ability in doubtful courses. Willingly would he have shut his eyes to what the Minister regarded as the former watchmaker's frolics.

Beaumarchais found the great instrument of governmental justice seated in his office meditating over the ministerial order before him. He made himself comfortable in an easy chair and shook Sartines's outstretched hand:

"My dear fellow, my play *must* be produced. What's the meaning of this order to stop it?"

"You must put it down to present circumstances. Your rather remarkable case is about to be decided. Your Memorials are making a great stir. A month ago certain incidents took place at a performance of *Eugénie*. We are afraid the play will contain references to your present position and lead to disturbances. In short, in the present state of affairs the Duc de la Vrillière, in the King's name, has stopped the piece."

"In the King's name—we know what that means! In reality my enemies have spread the rumour that the judicial bench will be scoffed at in the *Barber*. On the other hand Marin and yourself have read it officially and found nothing of the sort in it. I am bound in honour to have it performed as soon as possible. This is just the sort of thing that so far from dissuading me can only make me more determined. If the decree is maintained I shall cause trouble. I shall submit the play, with the licence signed by Marin and yourself, to

the Record Office of Parliament. I shall request that it be read by the United Parliaments. Then every one will learn that you allowed your judgment to be overridden by the Duc de la Vrillière; and your reputation will suffer. I am very sorry but I have enough to do to defend what little of mine is still left, and I cannot permit a further injury to be done to it without a protest."

"But my dear fellow . . ."

"Never, I tell you. Take steps to have the prohibition removed. I think you will succeed if you see the Dauphiness who knows the play and knows you. When you have done so, you might send me word to the Théâtre Français where I am returning for the last rehearsals. Good-bye."

And the irrepressible Beaumarchais strode off whistling.

Somewhat perplexed Sartines ordered his carriage and drove to Versailles to interview the Duc de la Vrillière. Then he saw the Dauphiness—afterwards Queen Marie Antoinette—who rejoiced at the prospect of being present at the first night. Two hours later Sartines was at the Théâtre Français. He found Beaumarchais in his shirt sleeves rehearsing one of the scenes of the play, and told him that the prohibition was suspended.

But the Duc de la Vrillière, Mme. du Barry and the Duc d'Aiguillon intrigued to such purpose that, next evening, an absolute and definite decree of prohibition was issued and addressed to each one of the players. The posters were covered over there and then. The

MADAME DU BARRY

La Tour

house had been sold out for the first six performances, and the money would have to be returned. The players, who had been put to great expense for scenery and dresses, lost their time and money, and on Saturday the 12th of February no performance was given; in short considerable dissatisfaction was expressed.

Goëzman had been feeling apprehensive and now rubbed his hands and stroked his beard. But next day he changed his tune. Since the Thursday Beaumarchais had worked night and day on his fourth Memorial. He read it to his friends and prudently retouched certain passages on their advice. With his mind inflamed by the ill-timed prohibition of his play, he surpassed himself, and on the Sunday he presented the magistrates, the Princes, and the Court with his fourth Memorial.

After the ball at the Opera House on Sunday evening hawkers were shouting and selling the fourth Memorial in the streets. It was received with rapture. Six thousand copies were sold in three days. The printing office was besieged. Crowds fought at the door and seized copies from the press still damp and unsewn.

The opening was a masterpiece. Beaumarchais's facetious, forensic eloquence rose to great heights. He imagined himself face to face with the Deity who had foretold his misfortunes:

"If the Beneficent Being who watches over all . . . had said to me: I am He by whom all is. Without Me you would not exist. I endowed you with a healthy and robust body. I placed in it a most active spirit.

You know with what profusion I have poured sensibility into your soul and gaiety into your disposition; but full as I see you are of the happiness of thinking, of feeling, you would be too happy without some sorrows to counterbalance your good fortune. Therefore you are about to be weighed down by innumerable calamities; torn to pieces by a thousand enemies; deprived of your liberty and of your property; accused of robbery, forgery, imposture, corruption, calumny; to groan under the opprobrium of a criminal prosecution; to be strangled by a judical sentence; to be attacked at every turn of your existence by the most absurd rumours; and to be long tossed to and fro in the scrutiny of public opinion. . . . I would have prostrated myself and made answer: Being of Beings I owe all to Thee; the happiness of existing, of thinking, of feeling; . . . If it be written that I must be tried by all the crosses which Thy severity proclaims . . . give me the strength to repel them and heedless of all my woes I will never cease to sing Thy praises. . . . If my misfortunes must begin with an unforeseen attack by a greedy legatee on a just debt, on a deed founded on the mutual esteem and natural justice of the contracting parties; grant me as an enemy an avaricious and unjust man known to be such . . . may he be sufficiently blundering to give proof of his secret connection with my enemies . . . and blinded by hatred may he be deceived into believing me capable of every crime. . . ."

La Blache tried to challenge Beaumarchais to a duel. But he cared little for such things and the year before

had avoided at great cost to himself a duel with the Duc de Chaulnes. "I have refused to fight better men," he told La Blache.

"If in consequence of this prosecution," he went on, "I am to be denounced to Parliament for attempting to corrupt a judge impossible to corrupt, and slander a man impossible to slander; Supreme Providence! may my accuser be a man of few brains; may he be a perjurer and forger; if he have an accomplice, may she be a woman of little sense; if she be cross-examined may she be led into contradictions, confess the truth, retract her confession, and retract again . . . such would be my ardent prayer . . . and if all these wishes were granted, I would add: Supreme Goodness! if it be written also that a number of busybodies should meddle with this business . . . (he caricatured Marin) . . . Give me Marin! . . . If this busybody must bribe a witness, I would dare ask that he be a muddle-headed man, a swaggerer without character . . . (he 'cut up' Bertrand d'Airolles) . . . Give me Bertrand d'Airolles! And if some miserable author must one day serve as Counsellor at this splendid Embassy . . . (he mangled Baculard, Counsellor of Embassy) . . . Give me Baculard! . . ."

It was like a tornado! And with what ease he pulverised all these dancing dolls in this marvellous Punch and Judy show!

From beginning to end the Memorial was remarkable. Adroitly he introduced M. de Nicolai, the President of the High Chamber of Parliament, a friend

of Goëzman, who had always shown a violent prejudice against him, going so far even as to distribute Goëzman's Memorials at his house. His name and scandalous intrigues had drawn attention to him. Beaumarchais diffused a plentiful sprinkling of sarcasm over him. By a happy transition he passed to a denunciation of the forger Goëzman; next he fell with all his might on Bertrand d'Airolles; and thence rose to a magnificent picture describing the meeting of the judges of the High Chambers and his emotion at the thought of appearing before them. Then came details of an insult from M. de Nicolai who had tried to exclude him from the Salle des Pas Perdus and ordered him to be arrested by the officers on the pretext that he had put his tongue out at him! Returning to the offensive against Marin, Beaumarchais threw himself upon him with great glee:

"Ah, M. Marin, how remote you are to-day from those happy times when with close-cropped and bare head, clad in a surplice, the symbol of your innocence, you delighted all La Ciotat by the prettiness of your trills on the organ or the shrill melody of your singing in the choir. . . . How great is the change in Marin! . . . And see how wickedness grows and spreads when one neglects to arrest it at the outset; this Marin, whose sole joy to begin with was

". . . Sometimes at the altar
To hand the vicar the oblation and the salt,"

left his jacket and wooden shoes and made but one leap from the organ to a tutorship, the censorship, a

secretaryship, and finally the *Gazette de France;* and now behold our Marin, his sleeves turned up to the elbow fishing in troubled waters; he slanders boldly and to his heart's content; he furtively does as much evil as lies within his power; he establishes with one hand reputations that he vilifies with the other: censorship, foreign newspapers, news letters, gossip; newspapers, leaflets, daily letters, fabricated, invented, distributed and so forth; another four pages and so forth; all these things are at his service. An eloquent writer, a veracious gazetteer, a clever censor, a journeyman pamphleteer, when he moves he crawls like a serpent; when he climbs he falls like a toad. At last crawling, climbing by leaps and bounds, but always flat on his stomach, he has worked to such good purpose that we have seen the pirate in our day driving to Versailles in a carriage and four; the carriage bearing a coat of arms on its panels; on a shield in the shape of an organ-case a figure of fame in a field of gules, the wings divided, the head downwards blowing a *marine* trumpet, and for support a figure of disgust representing Europe; all girded with a short cassock lined with a gazette, surmounted with a square cap with the legend on it: Oues-a-co, Marin (What is it? Marin!)."

Poor choir boy! And what a grotesque person! Marin was to bear the impress of this portrait to the end of his days.

Beaumarchais ended his Memorial by telling the story of his sister's engagement to Clavigo in Spain.

He led up to it by quoting an infamous letter which he accused his enemies of circulating, but it may well be that he fabricated it himself in order to introduce the romantic episode—a stratagem of war. Lack of scruple, propriety, reserve, a desire to exploit every circumstance; these things formed part of his bold and truculent character.

The Memorial produced an immense sensation. It was the main topic of conversation in Paris as in Versailles. Louis XV read it, and the Dauphiness and Mme. du Barry had the scene in which Beaumarchais and Mme. Goëzman were confronted performed before them. In the provinces and abroad the literary class took delight in it. The exiled members of the former Parliament feasted on it and wrote to the author expressing their admiration. Voltaire in his retreat at Ferney, smiling more than ever his sardonic smile, his shrivelled skin breaking into a thousand lines, wrote to a friend: "I have read Beaumarchais's fourth Memorial and I am still greatly excited by it; nothing has ever made a deeper impression on me. No comedy was ever more amusing, no tragedy more touching, no story better told, and above all no intricate subject more clearly elucidated." It was Voltaire the facile and formidable master of irony who thus paid his unreserved tribute of admiration. It was indeed a triumph!

Voltaire wrote with no less enthusiasm to d'Argental and the Marquis de Florian. Meantime, at their wits' end for a new calumny, the rumour was spread—

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

From a painting

Marin was first in the field—that Beaumarchais was not the author of the Memorials and the hand that wrote them was known, whereupon he made answer: "Why do not these blunderers get their Memorials written by the same pen?" And Jean Jacques Rousseau, the bear, said to those who spoke to him about it. "I do not know who wrote Beaumarchais's Memorials but what I know quite well is that one man does not write such Memorials for another." In a society circle in Frankfort they were read aloud and it was at one of these meetings that the suggestion was made to Goethe to take the Clavigo incident as the subject of a play.

Chancellor Maupeou alone laughed on the wrong side of his face as he saw his Parliament falling to pieces.

Early in February, 1774, *Eugénie* was revived at the Théâtre Français. Beaumarchais was the man of the hour. On that day he slipped into the pit alone to watch the performance. Seated beside him was a man who held forth on the play, the author, and the author's prosecution, ending by declaring that he had dined that day with M. d'Argental and heard him read a letter from Voltaire, "who still believes Beaumarchais never poisoned anyone. Now among the members of Parliament it is contended that he poisoned three wives." Beaumarchais forebore to interrupt and when he had finished said in his most serious manner:

"It is true this blackguard poisoned his three wives though he has only been married twice, and the Maupeou Parliament also knows that he ate his father

in a stew after smothering his mother-in-law between two thick slices of bread and butter. I am all the more certain of it as I am Beaumarchais, and if you don't clear out at once I will choke the life out of you."

The babbler hastened to make himself scarce and the incident raised a good laugh.

The judgment of the Court was expected on the 26th of February. A week earlier Bertrand d'Airolles made a discovery and notified the fact to the people of Paris in an Addition to his Memorial. He declared that he was never Beaumarchais's friend and protested against the decree of personal suspension in his case, and made an even greater exhibition of himself than in his former Memorial.

The clever Marin issued his last pamphlet on the eve of the judgment. By thus preventing Beaumarchais from replying to him he hoped to win victory with the last word. He tried to wriggle out of the mire in which Beaumarchais had dragged him and to that end contradicated everything his adversary had put forward. According to him he had never written in any *Gazette* or *Nouvelles à la Main* and yet it was notorious that both were supplied by him. After uttering these denials he went on to declare that Beaumarchais was neither the author of his Memorials nor his plays, but that they came from the pen of Dr. Gardanne whom he loaded with abuse and insult.

Gardanne at once issued a reply, and next day, the 26th of February, the day on which judgment was to be given, while Beaumarchais was undergoing a last

interrogatory and the judges were discussing the sentence which it was their duty to pronounce impartially, they could read his: "Reply to the libels printed and published by MM. Marin and Bertrand d'Airolles." A quiet, sensible man, Dr. Gardanne confined himself, in the eight pages which he submitted to the public, to proving the stupidity and malevolence of the insinuations launched against him. . . .

Saturday the 26th of February, 1774! At last the dawn of the great day had broken. The evening before the Prince de Monaco invited Beaumarchais to join him after the judgment and read *The Barber of Seville*. Beaumarchais received a number of similar invitations and accepted them as evidence of personal sympathy. But would he go? Possibly not. The menace of the pillory hung over him. He might be bound to a post in the open and exposed to the vulgar gaze—for ever disgraced.

But he had no intention of allowing things to go so far. He would take his own life if he were condemned to the pillory. He said no word to anyone, a proof of the gravity of his determination. All that night—he spent it at Gudin's place in the Quay des Orfèvres separated from the Châtelet Court by the bridge—was passed in going through files of old papers which he classified, labelled, sorted, destroyed, burnt. He put his affairs in order, prepared as far as possible the settlement of accounts left in abeyance. By three o'clock in the morning his task was done. As he was due to appear for a final interrogatory at six o'clock

he did not go to bed. With hands in pockets, eyes heavy with fatigue, ruffled hair, he paced up and down his room: these were the hours of dejection, the last hours of the condemned man who can do no more than wait and whose mind instinctively calls up the shadows of the past.

Beaumarchais saw himself as a little child, and then as a schoolboy when he might have shown more industry; at the watchmaker's bench where he wasted three out of six years. He saw his mother whom he might have made happier; his first duel; his early friends at Court some of whom had passed away, his old friend Pâris Duverney in particular. He saw a vision of the colour and music of Spain, and the young Marquise whom he had drawn into a scandalous life; the first night of *Eugénie* when he was hissed; the first night of *The Two Friends* when he was hissed; his second wife, the woman whom he had most loved, gone; his little son also gone; the miserable quarrel with the Duc de Chaulnes; the many friends who had dropped him since he was struggling in the midst of difficulties—Bertrand d'Airolles, Marin, d'Arnaud were not the only ones to cover him with infamy. He saw his life as a great failure. He sat down weary, despondent, heavy of heart and suddenly with elbows on his knees he covered his face with his hands and wept bitter tears; he sobbed aloud like a child. And the ashes of the papers in the grate smouldered and grew cold.

Beaumarchais collected himself. Dressed carefully

—he was to read *The Barber of Seville* that evening—he descended the stairs, a copy of the play in his pocket. Gudin, who had risen early in order to go with him, was waiting on the ground floor. He, too, could not help thinking of the fate in store for Beaumarchais. He wondered how a being so essentially kind, so warm-hearted to his own people, so open-handed and generous, how a mind so brilliant and gifted, a man who had never injured any one and rendered service to many, should live to see such infamous slanders, such fierce hatreds heaped upon his head. And he attributed it all to the envy and jealousy of little minds—sometimes he had unwittingly wounded the pride of the great—and furthermore to the readiness with which the most flagrantly false and malicious rumours were believed by those who knew nothing of him nor of his interests. . . .

Gudin went with him. A chill mist rose from the Seine and hid the ancient Châtelet from sight. Beaumarchais and his friend, alone on the Quay des Orfèvres, shivering, made their way on foot to the Court. Gudin embraced him and remained in the Salle des Pas Perdus. With a slight stoop, aged beyond his years, a disillusioned smile on his lips, he vanished into the grey twilight of the Court. At the door of the Record Office he straightened his back, frowned, clenched his fists and recovered his usual confident bearing: the man had disappeared making way for the suitor . . .

Beaumarchais watched the coming of the judges; they seemed none too wide awake. . . . And then for

the last time he was called to the bar to corroborate or refute certain evidence taken at the inquiry. He was very tired; but at half past ten nothing was to be done but exercise his soul in patience. He had regained perfect command over himself.

Towards midday friends gradually made their appearance. He held a reception. Amid exciting discussions, wagers for and against, he alone seemed to retain complete self-possession. He held forth on every subject except his own case; meanwhile his fate lay in the balance in the Grand Hall. . . . The judges were contending, deliberating, endeavouring to come to some agreement; and it was a terribly delicate business to reach an equitable verdict. Public opinion was overwrought, and the Parliament itself had had a bad press. The author of the Memorials had flouted and defied it in the persons of Nicolai and Goëzman. One of its own counsellors had been convicted of fraudulent and dishonourable conduct outside the case itself: the story of the false certificate of baptism was one instance. On the other hand Beaumarchais had bribed the wife of one of its judges. The fact was undeniable and acknowledged by him. But money could not in general buy these interviews. Mme. Goëzman had received and kept the money though she denied the fact. The other persons in the case were less seriously compromised.

Already at midday a great crowd was assembled at the approaches of the Court, and more or less fantastic rumours were afloat. In truth nothing was

known except that the judges were finding the greatest difficulty in coming to a decision. . . .

At two o'clock Beaumarchais, worn out, wrote a letter to the Prince de Monaco begging to be excused from his appointment. Not knowing at what hour judgment would be delivered he thought it well to hold himself free for the evening. Then leaving the Châtelet by a door leading to the quays he walked to Lépine's house, and fully dressed as he was stretched himself on a bed and slept the sleep of the just.

After twelve hours deliberation the judges at last agreed to punish all concerned in the case but to mete out more or less equal treatment to the three chief delinquents—Goëzman, his wife and Beaumarchais. And late that night the Court was opened, the public flocked in, and the Presiding Judge read the sentence:

"The Advocate General demands in the King's name in this case as a result of this trial that Le Jeay, Bertrand d'Airolles, Gabrielle Julie Jamart wife of Maître Goëzman, Caron de Beaumarchais be ordered to appear before the Court to be blamed on their knees and condemned each to pay three francs as alms to be distributed among the poor prisoners of the Conciergerie; the said Jamart, wife of the said Maître Goëzman, is condemned in addition to pay for distribution among the same prisoners three hundred and sixty francs received by her from the said Le Jeay, and the said Maître Goëzman is placed out of Court and enjoined to be more circumspect in future; the said Caron de Beaumarchais is ordered to appear before the

Counsellor's Court to ask pardon of the Court for the lack of respect with which in his Memorials he has spoken of the magistracy in general and of several members in particular; and the four Memorials printed in Paris by the said Caron de Beaumarchais are ordered to be torn up and burnt at the foot of the great staircase of the Court by the public executioner as containing scandalous expressions and imputations, offensive and injurious to the magistracy; the said Caron de Beaumarchais is forbidden to repeat the offence and write such Memorials in the future on pain of corporal punishment, and for writing them is condemned to pay twelve francs as alms to be distributed among the prisoners of the Conciergerie."

The reading was broken by loud demonstrations from the public: applause, yells, stamping of feet, hissing. The din was tremendous. The Presiding Judge finished his reading amid a general tumult of indignation, and the judges, hooted on rising, were compelled to escape by corridors unknown to the public.

It was an icily cold starlit night. M. Falconet, whom Beaumarchais had asked to wait for the verdict, managed to thread his way through the shouting throng and hasten to Mme. Lépine. Beaumarchais was still asleep. His family and intimate friends were waiting in the next room in an agony of suspense. When Falconet opened the door and entered, Beaumarchais's sisters burst out crying at the sight of his distorted face. Old M. Caron's eyes filled with tears

and he gnawed the ends of his mustache. Beaumarchais awoke and came into the room trying to smile. Falconet at last recovered himself sufficiently to tell them the result. They had expected the worst—the pillory.

The position though not desperate was none the less disturbing for the future; it meant disgrace, ruin, perhaps exile. Beaumarchais endeavoured to reassure them all, put on his hat, took Gudin by one arm and Falconet by the other, and said good night, adding: "We're going to see what remains to be done." He left the house cautiously. And indeed the sentence could be executed whenever it pleased the "gentlemen of the Parliament." The Court might send for him at any moment. As it was night time the danger was lessened. After walking a few steps Beaumarchais took leave of his two friends, expressing with emotion his affectionate gratitude for their generous support, and each returned home.

Beaumarchais, however, wandered for some time along the quays. For all his courage, he was more perturbed than he would have it appear, and the future seemed dark and disquieting. To begin with there was the disgrace of going down on his knees, with bowed head, hands behind his back, to receive the sentence of the Court and hear the Presiding Judge say: "The Court blames thee and declares thee infamous." Next there was the complete disorder in his affairs, ruin, penury; compelled to live abroad—but where and how? And in addition there was the mortification of driving

his family to despair and the anxiety caused by the ill-health of his father and Mme. Lépine.

Walking slowly, his head down, his stick under his arm, his hands in his pockets—it was chilly out of doors and a chill, too, struck the poor man's heart—he turned towards the house chosen for its peace and quietness now that, almost penniless as he was through La Blache, his family were scattered to the four corners of Paris. He was returning to the little old house with its projecting front in the Rue St. Denis where he was born, let since he left it to friends who permitted him, at his request, the use of a small room.

And filled with unspeakable dejection he went back to it that night with a feeling that he ought never to have left it, ought to have continued like his father the business of watchmaking in the dim light of its greenish shop-window. . . . "And yet I can't stay here now. I must work for my rehabilitation in both the La Blache and Goëzman cases. I must built up my fortune anew. I must have the support and assistance of the government. I must make myself necessary, even indispensable. But how am I to set about it?" He fell asleep still struggling with this serious problem.

Next day all Paris and all Versailles were in a tumult: the verdict of the Parliament had become known. At the house in the Rue de Condé where no one remained but the porter, a continuous stream of carriages emblazoned with coats of arms gathered throughout the day, and beautiful powdered ladies and noble lords alighted to inscribe their names—the Duc

de Nivernois, the Marquise de Tessé, her father the Duc de Noailles, the Duc d'Orleans grandfather of Louis Philippe, the Prince de Monaco, M. de Miromosnil, the Duc de Chartres, the Comtesse de Miramont, the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc de La Vallière, M. de Maurepas, M. de La Borde, M. de Mézieu, and M. de Sartines who came incognito on foot—he was in the service of the government—and signed with a large S and three stars. The Prince de Conti, always inclined to opposition, left a note containing this assurance of friendship among others: "I want you to dine with me to-morrow. We are of a sufficiently illustrious house to give an example to France of the manner in which a great citizen like you should be treated." On learning where Beaumarchais was living he drove to the Rue St. Denis, and chatted with him for a while from his carriage. Gudin at the window was waiting for his friend, whom he scarcely ever left, to come in: "It is now when I am no longer anything that everyone hastens to reckon me of some consequence," declared Beaumarchais.

Many other great personages, those personages of pre-revolution days, puerile in their amusements, but of such wide tastes, eclectic, highly cultivated, sincere friends of Beaumarchais whose great generosity, brilliant mind, mordant wit and unbounded courage they had learnt to admire at chance encounters, came to offer him their influence and support and assure him of their goodwill. Thus on the 28th of February the "blamed" Beaumarchais supped with the Prince de

Conti and forty of the proudest and most powerful of the French aristocracy, seated next Mme. Larrivée, the last sumptuous mistress of his host, restored to favour after a separation of ten years.

And Beaumarchais carried his audacity so far as to choose that particular moment to have his portrait drawn by Cochin and to distribute it.

CHAPTER VI

"Why must there always be something suspicious in your conduct?"—*The Marriage of Figaro.*

ALL this public clamour greatly disturbed M. de Sartines, who feared lest he should be compelled to act with rigour "in the name of the King," especially as Beaumarchais was credited with the intention of writing further Memorials against his judges. These gentlemen, indeed, thought it well in face of public excitement to be content with delivering their judgment without attempting to enforce it. Beaumarchais was none the less "blamed" and sought to obtain the Government's goodwill.

Sartines who knew his retreat sent for him:

"My dear fellow, I should be very sorry to see you in any further trouble," he said. "Therefore I advise you not to show yourself publicly anywhere. All this business is making too much stir, irritating too many powerful persons, and unless you let public opinion quiet down there will be serious and permanent consequences for you one day. A week ago again, as you probably know, there was a violent demonstration when reference was made to the venality of magistrates at a performance of *Crispin Rival de son*

Maître. Nicolai was present and was hissed on leaving the theatre. It is not enough for you to be blamed, it is also necessary to be modest! Keep quiet and whatever you do don't write anything—the King won't have it—and everything will come out all right in the long run."

"Thanks for your advice which I am inclined to follow. I was preparing to go to England; but I should like to have those verdicts in the La Blache tragi-comedy and the Goëzman farce definitely quashed. I am inclined to wait but not too long. Would it not be possible to interest His Majesty in some way or other in my affairs?"

"Well, there may be some method, particularly if you are in England. You know, perhaps, that a scandalous sheet is printed there, dangerous because, between ourselves, there are scandalous men and women and things at Court. The writer calls himself *Le Gazetier Cuirasse.*[1] In reality nothing can be done against the scoundrel who edits the sheet, a man named Théveneau de Morande. He lives abroad. All that we can do is to send our agents to England and get rid of him quietly. England has left us free to do so. That permission was given quite recently after the appearance of *Mémoires Secrets d'une Femme Publique*, a copy of which Morande kindly sent to Mme. du Barry on whose life it is founded, intimating that he would be ready to suppress it at a price. He had already succeeded in other enterprises of the sort affecting great persons here. Mme. du Barry of course is not in-

[1] "The Journalist in Armour."

different to the revelations in these secret memoirs, and has implored the King to spare no effort to silence this dangerous chatterer. The King and the Duc d'Aiguillon after sending, without effect, your friend the Comte de Lauraguais with a flag of truce, thinking it would be well to get rid of this master blackmailer once for all rather than run the risk of having to pay him a big sum whenever he thinks fit to ask for it, directed me to send some police agents to England with instructions to bring Morande back quietly or to throw him just as quietly into the Thames. The whole thing was arranged with the English Ambassador and His Britannic Majesty. Unfortunately our police were stupid enough to talk about their intention to a certain French adventuress, Mme. de Godeville, living in England. Morande, forewarned, raised the cry of tyranny, giving himself out as a political exile. The English allowed themselves to be taken in, and our police agents and spies returned a month ago after running the gauntlet of a sound thrashing and barely escaping being hanged. In short they had to decamp and return empty handed."

"It's all rather amusing. I may possibly find among my connections in England a sturdy fellow to settle the business. In that case I'll put him in touch with Lauraguais, and His Majesty will doubtless be well pleased. Anyway I will see. Good-by, dear friend. I will write about anything that seems of interest and you must give me the news of Paris and Versailles."

"That's it. I often see our mutual friend La Borde and he will tell me all about Versailles. As to Paris, it is part of my professional duty to know everything that goes on. Good-by, Beaumarchais. Pleasant journey—and above all be sensible."

They cordially shook hands and with a smile on his lips Beaumarchais left M. de Sartines.

That same evening after writing several letters and taking a sorrowful farewell of his family and Gudin, Beaumarchais set out, like an ordinary citizen by diligence from Paris, in the cold fine rain. He spent a few days in Flanders, and then embarked on a small sailing vessel for England. He reached London knowing no more English than he knew Spanish when ten years before he arrived in Madrid. But those were the great days of the Encyclopædists, "when all the world spoke French," including Catherine the Great and Frederick the Great.

Beaumarchais travelled under the assumed name of Chevalier de Ronac—an anagram of Caron—to escape the attentions which the use of his own name might have brought down upon him. And with his spare money in his pocket he soon found a small flat in Ploone Street which he himself furnished with the care incidental to all his undertakings. Before his departure he wrote a letter to La Borde which gives a glimpse of his real state of mind:

"They have then delivered it at last, this abominable sentence, this masterpiece of animosity and iniquity. Here I am cut off from society and dis-

honoured in the middle of my career. I know, my friend, that the punishment of opinion ought not to trouble any but those who deserve it. I know that unjust judges can do their worst against the person of an innocent man and nothing against his reputation. All France have called and inscribed their names at my house since Saturday. . . . You know, my friend, that I have hitherto lived a life of peace and quietness, and I should never have written on political matters, had not a host of powerful enemies combined to ruin me. . . . I have the strength to bear a misfortune which I have not deserved; but my father who has seventy-seven years of honour and labour over his head, and is dying of grief, my sisters who are women and weak, one of whom is vomiting blood and the other can scarcely breathe—these are the things which are killing me and for which I cannot be consoled."

Moreover he had written him a letter from Flanders to be submitted to the King declaring his intention to preserve an absolute silence in the future as the King desired; that he was sailing for England under the name of Ronac and hoped the King would be pleased to have justice done to him. La Borde for his part had seen Sartines and confident of his power to do his friend a service endeavoured to plead his cause with Louis XV by explaining the true aspect of things.

Louis XV seemed to regard it as an excellent opportunity, on the principle of give and take, to rid himself of a heavy anxiety and permit Beaumarchais to win his favour again. After reading Beaumarchais's

letter which La Borde, the King's Groom of the Chamber, handed him at a levee, the King asked:

"Is your friend Beaumarchais a man of merit? We have not spoken since La Vallière showed me six years ago how clever he was at calculations, but I bear him no ill-will and have always looked upon him as an able man. As he is so bent on rehabilitating himself, and Sartines, you say, has had a word with him on the Morande affair which can only be hushed up by a skilful diplomat who can inspire confidence, I am inclined to trust him with the negotiations since he happens to be in England under an assumed name. Would he be sufficiently discreet? Can we rely on him for the errand? To all appearance it is the work of a spy, but in fact it is a confidential diplomatic mission."

"Sire, I am confident that you can depend on him. He will place all his brains and ability at your Majesty's service when you let him know that such is your wish."

"Well, La Borde, take it upon yourself to tell him so and summon him to Versailles as soon as may be. I will give orders for the Chevalier de Ronac to be admitted as soon as he appears. And if he carries this matter through with zeal and success I will grant him every facility to obtain a reversal of his sentence since he still wants to go to law! As his two cases do not imply any grave offence and their form alone constitutes the charges against him, he will doubtless achieve his purpose if he gets out of the jurisdiction of my Chancellor's Parliament. . . . Therefore, La Borde, I am ready to see him. Let him lose no time."

La Borde made obeisance and withdrew and at once wrote to Beaumarchais by special messenger to London. Four days later the Chevalier de Ronac entered with becoming respect the King's small study, at one time so familiar to him. Louis XV was gracious, gave him his orders, and sent him to the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for further explanations and details. The duke was an intimate friend of Goëzman who had helped him with his pen before and after the fall of the Duc de Choiseul and was indirectly implicated in the Goëzman case, but he did not know Beaumarchais personally. Beaumarchais therefore entered the presence of an affable and courteous minister.

Furnished with such instructions as were necessary, Beaumarchais returned to London. Thanks to the Comte de Lauraguais he was soon able to get in touch with Morande and his confederate the Marquis de Pelleport at a small printing office in the basement of a house in the suburbs of London. Still playing the part of the Chevalier de Ronac, he adroitly set about his task, gained the confidence of "the journalist in armour" and on the strength of certain promises in writing, succeeded, within a week, in stopping the printing of the secret memoirs and two similar publications, and in holding up parcels of the former work on the point of being dispatched to Holland and France. Morande gave Beaumarchais a copy of each work, and on receiving the promise of a considerable sum of money, agreed to allow him a week in which to return

to France and bring back the amount. If at the expiration of a week no payment were forthcoming Morande would consider himself released from his engagement and be at liberty to resume the printing and send off his parcels. Beaumarchais once more crossed the Channel, reached Versailles, saw the King and handed him the three works. The King expressed surprise at his promptitude and sent him once more to the Duc d'Aiguillon to report the result of his mission and to arrange for a settlement on Morande's terms. But Louis XV, mistrustful of his minister both on his own and Beaumarchais's account, forbade him to tell d'Aiguillon that he had seen and given the King copies of the libels before calling on the minister.

The Duc d'Aiguillon received the Chevalier de Ronac, who explained Morande's undertaking and the outcome of his negotiations and asked for the necessary credits to enable him to pay the journalist for his silence. Keenly interested, for he was himself violently attacked in one of the libels, and no less surprised at the celerity and confidence with which the diplomat-cum-police agent had done his work, the duke scrutinised him closely and seemed to recognise the features of the author of the Memorials, whose portrait was in circulation.

"You are the devil or M. de Beaumarchais," he said.

"I am only Beaumarchais, at your service," was the reply.

"Very good. What you have done is without

doubt of considerable value, but for my own sake and for the safety of the State, I should very much like you to assist the police in laying hands on this fellow Morande, after tactfully questioning him on the identity of other libellous writers and extracting from him the names of his correspondents in France, for obviously there are influential persons egging him on and providing substantial support. Do you understand me, M. de Beaumarchais?"

"Too well," returned Beaumarchais, rising from his seat. "I am quite willing to stop the publication of libels dishonouring to the Court of France, but to play the part of informer—no! I refuse to become the instrument of a general persecution of bastilles and dungeons. That's all I wish to say. I would only remind you that, in the circumstances, I must decline to continue my mission which would not be the same as that with which His Majesty entrusted me, that these libels will be published a week from now if you persist in your intentions. I have the honour to wish you good day."

The duke told Louis XV what had happened. Beaumarchais, invited to give his reasons, gave them, and the King readily understood that such a mission was odious to him, for apart from the little confidence to be placed in the promises of a man like Morande, he considered it would be dishonouring to himself to act in any way the part of police spy. The duke showed his resentment, and Beaumarchais was on the point of throwing it all up in discouragement and disgust. But

the King insisted, told him again that he had full confidence in him, and asked him only to put an end to the libels.

With twenty thousand francs from the King's privy purse and a deed conferring an annuity of four thousand francs on Morande in his pocket—would Mme. du Barry's honour be estimated at the value of one hundred and fifty thousand francs to-day?—Beaumarchais set out for England for the third time on the 8th April, 1774.

Arrived in London again he at once saw that Morande was not so favourably disposed towards him as before. At Calais he had imagined that he was being followed. The Duc d'Aiguillon was taking his revenge and putting a spoke in his wheel. Beaumarchais gave out in a loud voice his intention of staying at his hotel for several days, and to throw the minister's spies off the scent set sail that same evening. A small decked boat obtained with some difficulty landed him at Hastings.

On reaching London he found Morande distrustful, exacting, and saw that his real identity had been disclosed. He had no small difficulty in persuading him to keep to his engagement. In the end he succeeded and Morande began to look upon him with respect for his courage, energy and sincerity. Admiring in him, too, the author of the Memorials, he warned him to be on his guard for the Duc d'Aiguillon was trying to impede the negotiations and to get him out of the way if needs be. Morande

The Rt Hon.ble Wm
Henry Earl of Rochford
One of his Majesties
principal Secretaries of State
Lord Lieutenant Custos Rotulorum
Vice Admiral of the County of Essex

EARL OF ROCHFORD

After the painting by Dupra

had received anonymous letters asking his assistance in an act of treachery, and feared lest he himself should afterwards fall into the trap. In these circumstances Beaumarchais, feeling practically sure of Morande, whose information coincided with his own discoveries, called on Lord Rochford—formerly English Ambassador in Spain and now Secretary of State—whom he had known years before in Madrid, told him of the course of events, and even sketched out with him the plan of an agreement between the two governments by which the English government would undertake to keep an eye henceforward on libellous writings against the French government and prevent their publication. Lord Rochford granted him, moreover, a bodyguard which enabled him to return to France safe and sound, as he desired, for the affair with Morande still remained in abeyance though in principle it was settled. Morande agreed to allow matters to rest "as they were" pending Beaumarchais's return.

On the 20th of April, Beaumarchais, worn out with fatigue and almost at the end of his resources, arrived once more at Versailles. He saw the King and complained of the Duc d'Aiguillon's methods. The King, displeased with the duke, sent Beaumarchais to him and directed La Borde to accompany him. The duke flew into a rage and took the high hand.

"How dare you talk to me like this! It's disgraceful. To suggest these things of other people merely proves that you would be ready to do them yourself if necessary."

"Monsieur!"

"I have no interest in police matters. I am the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and if you have been molested in your police work by your rivals, you should take your grievances to the police. I think M. de Sartines knows better than anyone else where your spies come from. Go, monsieur, and don't worry me with your suspicions which are of no interest to me, and consider yourself lucky that I have not had you thrown out."

"Very well. I don't care a hang for your threats, and I can do without your help. I only ask you to allow me to serve the King without getting in the way."

For conscience's sake Beaumarchais went to see Sartines but rather to place him in possession of the facts than to make certain of his friendship. The duke learned of Beaumarchais's visit to Sartines and his rage against him knew no bounds. But the King had been told and directed La Borde to write to Beaumarchais that "His Majesty approved his conduct and his confidence in M. de Sartines." It meant that the Duc d'Aiguillon was virtually disavowed.

Caring little for the minister's animosity and almost certain that it would no longer be active after this warning, Beaumarchais set out again accompanied this time by Gudin who travelled as a tourist and knew nothing of his mission. When they reached London Beaumarchais confided in him. After making final arrangements Beaumarchais, the complaisant journalist, and Gudin, who felt within him the ardent soul of a

conspirator, met at Morande's suburban printing office and took their places on the moonless night of the 24th of April, 1774, in a cart laden with printed publications. They drove to some fields near St. Pancras and burnt the secret memoirs and other works from Morande's pen in a disused limekiln. Morande received his bag of gold and deed of annuity and returned to his lodgings in the early morning with Beaumarchais and Gudin.

Beaumarchais was rid of the libels but realising the many difficulties to which a foreigner entrusted with such a mission as his was exposed, he resumed without loss of time his negotiations with Lord Rochford on the basis laid down at his former visit. In less than a week an agreement was worked out, drafted and settled. With a copy of this secret agreement in his pocket undertaken in the name of the French Government on his own initiative, he returned with Gudin to France on the 8th of May.

At Boulogne where they landed they learnt from a Paris courier that the King was down with smallpox and there was no hope of saving him. Beaumarchais was in despair: "My dear Gudin, you see I have had my work for nothing. Obviously we shall reach Paris to find the King dying. I marvel at the strange fate that pursues me. If the King had remained in good health for another week I should have regained my civil rights of which that infamous sentence robbed me. I had his royal word for it, and he was full of good will towards me. After travelling seven hundred and eighty leagues in six weeks in the King's service,

nothing remains to me but swollen legs and an empty purse."

He wrote to La Borde from Boulogne. He wanted to see him as soon as he reached Paris to learn if the position was indeed hopeless. He also wrote to Théveneau de Morande, and the brilliant results of his clever and genial diplomacy were apparent in his letter:

"You have done your utmost to prove to me that you are returning in all good faith to the sentiments and conduct of an honest Frenchman . . . it is because you have convinced me that you intend to persist in these praiseworthy resolutions that I take a pleasure in corresponding with you. What a difference in our destinies! By chance I am chosen to stop the publication of a libellous work; I work day and night for six weeks; I travel nearly seven hundred leagues, I spend nearly five hundred louis to prevent innumerable evils. You gain from this work one hundred thousand francs and your peace of mind while I do not even know whether I shall ever be reimbursed for my travelling expenses."

Then he took the diligence for Paris and saw La Borde on his arrival: "The King is dying and as far as I know has left no instructions about you. When all is over Mme. du Barry alone would be disposed to honour the King's word, but from all appearance the Dauphin will lose no time after his grandfather's death in banishing her whom he has always called 'the' du Barry."

And indeed Louis XV died on the 10th of May, and

Louis XVI at once banished the du Barry. Some scribbler wrote, as was the mania in those days, a quatrain not particularly clever on the confusion at Court:

Les Barils are running,
La Vrille is outworn,
Le Pou is hopping,
L'Aiguillon's forlorn.

Beaumarchais, without money and without hope, drew up, on Sartines's advice, a memorial for the new King narrating the successive phases of his mission and calling Louis XVI's attention to the late King's promises. It was an entirely fruitless step at the moment. Louis XVI was winding up his grandfather's affairs, changing his ministers, absorbed in interests of immediate importance and gave but scant attention to the memorial, considering that Beaumarchais could wait. . . .

At the beginning of June, 1774, Beaumarchais saw the approach of final disaster. He knew that "later" meant "too late." The time allowed for his appeal would have elapsed and Louis XVI, having no need of him, would perhaps reimburse the expenses of his mission to London but would not grant him the grace of a "letter of relief of time"—in other words a more or less considerable extension of time in which to appeal against his sentence.

He felt the coming of ruin upon him. He went to Sartines and asked his advice. Sartines's connection with the police and policemen had somewhat lessened

his moral scruples. Therefore he gave him a few simple hints:

"It can't be helped, my dear fellow. There is only one way out of the difficulty. You must offer your services to the King, and offer them in circumstances which will make them indispensable." And after a pause with a significant look he asked: "Do we understand each other? I think you are sufficiently clever not to do anything silly or rash. Everything depends on that you know."

"Thanks, I'll think it over," he returned.

Beaumarchais came away from the interview in perplexity. "Obviously," he thought, "I must stake my all. I feel that it will be all up with me very soon unless something happens to make my services essential to Louis XVI, but there is no reason to suppose that such an event will occur of itself. It will have to be some secret diplomatic mission, called for by political attacks from abroad. But the King and Queen at the moment give libellous writers nothing to lay hold of. . . .

"Nothing? Well, yes, perhaps something after all. There are always means of dealing a blow at people even when nothing can be urged against them. The throne of France is not particularly secure. There is no child in the Bourbon family. Foreign newspapers have already commented on the fact. Here is an opening for an attack by indulging in a little exaggeration and striking at both sides, but I don't want to do them any harm: it is a means to an end. Do the

thing and then undo it. Yes, but that requires a carefully thought out plan such as will injure no one—not even myself!"

He reached his home in the Rue St. Denis. He went upstairs to his room, shut himself in and thought hard as he nibbled his quill pen. At last he sat down at his table and began to write, making numerous erasures.

"Plan (1). Letter to Sartines, placing myself at the King's disposal which letter he will submit to the King. (2) Get Morande, remaining anonymous myself, to insert an announcement concerning the supposed libels in certain London newspapers. The title [here came a pause and many erasures, and at last the words]: A dissertation extracted from a longer work or important notice to the Spanish Branch on its right to the throne of France in default of heirs which may be of use even to the Bourbon family and Louis XVI in particular. 'No one will imagine with such a title that the work was by Beaumarchais.' [Now came a long pause and more erasures. At last Beaumarchais made up his mind to invent a likely Jewish name and give the fictitious author other names so as to throw inquirers off the scent.] Guillaume Angelucci; in writing to Morande sign G. A., Paris, 1774. (3) Announce the work as in preparation in England and Holland. (4) For greater security make a violent attack on Sartines and mention the fact in the newspapers. (5) Keep Sartines in ignorance of the whole thing. (6) When the King has learnt about it from the newspapers and

has become alarmed have recourse to Sartines as an interested party since he is attacked and is Lieutenant General of Police. Sartines will advise him to send me to London. (7) After that, leave for England; enliven the journey, season nicely the negotiations, try to obtain from the King himself an official order in due form to facilitate the work. (8) Return to France with a demand in both hands for the annulment of the sentence. . . .

"I will say nothing about the matter to a soul, not even to Sartines, who might think that I was going too far. Then the trick will be done. No one will be any the worse—except public funds. I have been robbed of my own money. I have worked for six months in the face of every difficulty only to get results for others, and to find myself deprived of my just reward. The more's the pity. I am playing my last card in a dangerous game. If I succeed it will restore the balance—have done with scruples! *Primum vivere, deinde philosophari* . . . not forgetting that the compensation intended to silence Angelucci will find its way into my pockets; they will look all the better for it. Let's make a start. First the letter to Morande, next the letter to the King through Sartines, and then the composition of the libel: Not too long or too short, not too mild or too severe, and above all not too much Beaumarchais. I will have the copies secretly printed without, of course, Morande's help. I mustn't set him a bad example, and he wouldn't understand. There's no time to lose but I shall have to go slowly.

Upon my word I am playing a comedy in the manner of my own scheming Figaro!"

It was the character of the tricky Scapin[1] that Beaumarchais, impelled by necessity, was in reality assuming. To win back his civil rights which had been unjustly and publicly wrested from him he was to dishonour himself and deceive the King. But he meant to keep the whole thing secret and his own character would not suffer.

A week later, at the end of June, everything was ready; the scheme had worked admirably. Two English newspapers and one Dutch announced in identical terms the work as "in preparation." The King, perturbed, sent for Sartines who suggested employing Beaumarchais again since he had proved his skill in the Morande affair and, said Sartines, "only asks, as he wrote in the letter which I recently submitted to Your Majesty, to serve his King and win back what he has lost." The King directed Sartines to arrange matters but did not himself see Beaumarchais. While waiting to set out on his travels he passed an agreeable day or two. Accompanied by his friend the Prince de Conti he went to see a play by Marsollier based on the Clavigo incident in which the chief characters were Norac (Caron) and Javolci (Clavigo). Meantime Goethe was also writing his play *Clavigo*.

To be on the safe side Beaumarchais set his mind on obtaining a written order from the King. He left Paris, however, furnished only with Sartines's letter of

[1] The valet in Molière's comedy *Les Fourberies de Scapin*.

recommendation, a good supply of cash from the Treasury, and, in his valise, the manuscript of the libel which he was ordered to suppress but of which in reality he intended to have two copies printed in London.

He played his part in London very cleverly, got an interview even with Lord Rochford, to whom of course he told the same tale in order to obtain greater facilities for carrying out his little game and working up a proper background. To be sure he had one or two confederates playing the parts of Angelucci and his accomplices before the English police. In any case Lord Rochford seemed scarcely disposed to help the bogus diplomat whose mission he looked upon "as a police affair and one of espionage, in a word as the business of a base underling." And with very good reason! Poor Lord Rochford, whose ears Beaumarchais stuffed with Angelucci's misdeeds—Angelucci in England had blossomed forth into Hatkinson—and the difficulties of performing his mission, failed to see what Beaumarchais was driving at and had little confidence in him seeing the dubious nature of the affair and the intrinsic ambiguity surrounding Angelucci. Moreover the Morande incident had rather disturbed him and he was not disposed to lend further countenance to matters of the sort.

Beaumarchais seized the opportunity during the next fortnight repeatedly to demand from Sartines an order signed by the King, a draft of which he had the hardihood to compose himself.

"M. de Beaumarchais, entrusted with my secret orders, will leave for his destination as soon as he possibly can. The discretion and promptness he may display in their execution will be the most agreeable proof he can give me of his zeal in my service."

Sartines, who now knew his Beaumarchais, began to fear lest his irrepressible friend was up to his old tricks, and he strove to obtain from the young and inexperienced but quietly obstinate King the order which his partner so eagerly desired. In the end he received it at Marly on the 10th of July. The King wrote and dated and signed it in his own hand in the form submitted by Sartines, who seemed to realise that a failure on Beaumarchais's part would react on his own position and bring down on him the wrath of the Queen. Beaumarchais, overcome with joy, wrote an almost lyrical letter of thanks to the King in his elation.

It is surprising in the face of Beaumarchais's persistence and his exuberant enthusiasm that neither Sartines nor the King scented his embarrassment and the plot that lay behind it. In short, Beaumarchais, wearing round his neck a gold box which he had had made to contain the King's order, did wonders—at least he said so. He fixed, in consultation with himself of course, the price of silencing Angelucci—nowhere to be found or seen except by himself—at fourteen hundred pounds or one hundred and fifty thousand francs at present values. For this sum four hundred copies of the libel were burnt at the same spot where Morande's works were burnt two months earlier.

But there was no annuity this time. In other words, his hands were free for the future; there was merely an agreement at the bottom of which in an uncertain scrawl were the words—written by Beaumarchais with his left hand perhaps—"G. Angelucci approves the agreement." Could anything be more fantastic than the sight of this good Jew signing without a tremor an agreement which stigmatised him as a liar? Beaumarchais let himself be carried away and neglected the lesser precautions. . . . But one cannot think of everything! . . .

He went on to Amsterdam ostensibly with Angelucci to supervise the destruction of a Dutch edition. He sent his valet in advance with orders to stop the printing. Thus no one would be able to say that he travelled *alone* from London to Calais and then *alone* from Calais to Amsterdam while he could claim that he was accompanied by Angelucci who had left his name of Hatkinson behind in London. Arrived in Amsterdam, everything, of course, worked according to plan, and he cherished the thought, so at least he wrote to his friends in his letters, of seeing something of the country as a tourist, when he learnt—it is difficult to see how as all the negotiations were over—of Angelucci's flight with the fourteen hundred pounds in his valise, and in addition a copy of the libel surreptitiously snatched from the burning.

He had fled, had this singular man, and even left his address behind, or very nearly so! Beaumarchais determined to show his zeal and began by involving

himself in an inextricable tangle. On arriving in Amsterdam he reflected that if the whole business were so soon and satisfactorily disposed of, it would be thought in Versailles that nothing was easier than to carry out this kind of mission, and he thought it well to overdo it a little since the King and Sartines were so readily "caught." Angelucci had kindly let it be known that he was going to Nuremberg with his spoils and reissue his work in French and Italian. It was a likely story! Beaumarchais was of course aware of Angelucci's intentions before his departure from Amsterdam for he proceeded to dash off in pursuit of the fugitive! He wrote to M. de Sartines:

"I am like a lion; I have no more money but I have diamonds and jewelry; I shall sell everything and mad with rage I shall resume my post-travelling . . . I do not understand German, the roads I am about to take are unknown to me, but I have procured a good map, and I already see that I must go to Nimeguen, Cleves, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Frankfort, Mayence and finally Nuremberg. I shall travel day and night if I do not drop from fatigue on the way. Woe to the abominable man who compels me to travel three or four hundred leagues more when I thought I was about to take a rest! If I find him on the road, I shall strip him of his papers and kill him for the anxiety and trouble he has caused me."

Beaumarchais laid down his pen and throwing himself back in his chair burst into a loud laugh. What a splendid joke!

The letter seems insincere, smacks of artifice. His manner of expressing himself is unconvincing. Obviously he was letting himself go and the effect of his barefaced deceit might easily fall on his head just as the trickeries of Scapin recoiled on himself.

CHAPTER VII

"Politics, intrigue? . . . I look upon them as pretty well synonymous terms."—*The Marriage of Figaro.*

BEAUMARCHAIS set out from Amsterdam by post-chaise and during the next ten days pursued the elusive Angelucci by stages. It was a long chase. He grew keener and more excited as the days sped by. On the 14th of August he was nearing Nuremberg—the last posting house was passed at midday—and he entered the forest of Neustadt. The heavy horses trotted along with a rumble of wheels, and the fat sleepy driver ever and anon urged them on with a cut of his whip. The dark fir trees stretched out on either side of the winding road. Suddenly at a turning Beaumarchais—he had hatched his scheme since his arrival in Amsterdam—uttered a cry, pretended to see something on the road, leant his head from the window, asked the driver to pull up, and rushed into the forest. The driver climbed down from his box seat and seized the opportunity to stretch his legs. Five, ten, twenty minutes elapsed, the driver had taken the stiffness out of his legs, his horses pawed the ground, but there was no sign of his fare. He took the small horn hanging round his neck—all drivers

of post-chaises in those parts blew a warning note at turnings in the road—and put it to his lips. The sound of the horn rang through the forest, and the fat German, plunging with great difficulty among the trees, caught sight of his man returning pale, distraught, staggering on his feet, his face bedaubed with blood, holding both hands against his chest.

The fat German ran to his assistance as fast as his top boots would carry him. He knew no French and Beaumarchais knew no German but they managed to understand each other. In a weak voice Beaumarchais said:

"I have been attacked by brigands. I defended myself but my pistol missed fire, and I would have been stabbed to death had you not sounded your horn which put them to flight. You have saved my life and you shall have something for yourself."

Breathing heavily, Beaumarchais allowed the rotund driver to assist him to the chaise. All attention, the man placed the cushions comfortably for him, hastily dressed his wounds from the water of a neighbouring brook, and whipped up his horses. Now and again he leant on one side to take a look through the window at his patient.

At one moment he saw him putting away a razor in his valise. In short, Beaumarchais did not lose consciousness, and the fat driver cracking his whip drove his traveller at an unflagging pace towards Nuremberg. They soon arrived, the horses covered with foam, and on the evening of the 14th of August, 1774, after

this remarkable adventure, M. de Ronac put up at the Coq Rouge Inn showing a wound on his face, a cut on his left hand, and a scratch on his chest—the brigand's knife it appears had slid off the gold box containing the King's order!

He was in a feverish state and the innkeeper found him excited and strange in his manner and felt uneasy. He feared his customer might indulge in some mad eccentricity. Next morning, after an agitated night, Beaumarchais betook himself, his wounds suitably dressed and bandaged, to the Burgomaster of Nuremberg and lodged a complaint. The Burgomaster spoke French after a fashion.

Beaumarchais gave him a detailed account of the assault. He added a description of the bogus Angelucci, declaring that he was probably mixed up in the matter and in hiding in Nuremberg. He suggested that an effort should be made to arrest, in the name of the Empress Maria Theresa, any person calling himself Angelucci or Hatkinson.

At this point the Burgomaster felt suspicious.

"How could this Jew have known you were going to get out of the post-chaise at that moment and why did you go into the forest?" he asked.

"I had my reasons but I can only give them to Her Majesty the Empress whom I am going to see about this Jew."

"I find it all very mysterious. I see that the men who tried to murder you were not robbers since you know them so well."

Beaumarchais was somewhat taken aback by the Burgomaster's astute remarks. They told on his nerves and he began to fear lest the truth, the much more simple and much less heroic truth, should be more or less discovered. He had shammed the whole thing from the stopping of the post-chaise down to the act of wounding himself rather seriously with his own razor—the razor of Figaro the crafty and dexterous barber!

He had fabricated this fantastic story, and it was this story that he would tell the Empress Maria Theresa when he reached Vienna. He would tell her that he caught sight of Angelucci on horseback from the post-chaise whereupon he uttered a cry and stopped the chaise. Angelucci looked round and recognising the chaise and the traveller dived into the wood. (A likely story!) He jumped from the post-chaise and started in pursuit of Angelucci impeded by the trees, and, pistol in hand, stopped him, threw him off his horse, turned his pockets out, emptied his valise and found in it the stolen copy of the libel and the fourteen hundred pounds. In short, satisfied with recovering the volume he spared his life. He even allowed him to keep a part—what misplaced generosity!—almost one half of the money. Then he left him and was making ready to return to the post-chaise when the brigands appeared on the scene and robbed him of all.

The fight when his pistol missed fire, the blows from a knife, the most dangerous of which providentially slid along his gold box, the arrival of the driver who failed

MARIE THÉRÈSE OF AUSTRIA

After the painting by Maytens

to see the robbers since they fled when they heard the sound of the horn—all these things revealed but an elementary flight of imagination after such untold efforts on Beaumarchais's part.

Of course he would tell of his mission and the fictitious encounter with Angelucci to no one but the Empress and here Louis XVI's order, so ardently desired by him, would ensure an audience and her confidence. The truth was that he had to pretend that the copy of the libel had been recovered with great difficulty and it was a scene which could not have been enacted in the heart of a town. And then his wounds, ostensibly received at the peril of his life in defending the honour of the King and Queen, would make a good impression and help him to obtain his rehabilitation.

Moreover he had to find a reason for the disappearance of the fourteen hundred pounds seeing that he had recovered the volume. Either he would be regarded as an indifferent diplomatist if after forcing the treacherous Angelucci to disgorge the volume he allowed him to keep the money, or if he stated that he still held the money, he would be called upon to account for it to the Treasury and gain nothing from his manœuvres. It was to guard against this contingency that he added the story of the robbery. Since half the money was kept by Angelucci and half stolen from him, it followed that nothing remained in his hands. As a matter of fact neither the money nor the libel had left his valise since his departure from Paris. Only the razor had come out of it. . . .

With his arm in a sling and his head bandaged Beaumarchais set out for Vienna, but the jolting of the post-chaise was too much for him and as it was easy to reach Vienna by sailing down the Danube from Ratisbon, he covered the remainder of the distance by boat, a restful way of travelling, sending his luggage on to Vienna by the fat driver whose post-chaise he had engaged to take him to Paris when his health was restored.

He reached Vienna suffering from a cough, his wounds insufficiently dressed. Then he drafted a letter to the Empress Maria Theresa. He gave his real name, stating his readiness to prove it by showing the King's order which never left him. But he only vaguely indicated his mission and his reasons for soliciting an audience in case, he said, some other person should open his letter to her. He was a stranger in Vienna and was reluctant to appeal to the French Embassy. He met the Prince de Ligne whom he knew and the Prince expressed sympathy to see him looking so ill but that was all. Then he went to call on the Empress's secretary, the Baron de Neny. He was received with scant courtesy. At the sight of his wounded face and his anything but brilliant appearance the Baron took him for an adventurer. His mysterious manner, too, failed to inspire confidence. The Baron refused to take charge of his letter without some explanation which Beaumarchais declined to give; and he was on the point of having him shown out when raising his voice and putting a bold face on it Beaumarchais exclaimed:

"I shall hold you responsible to Her Majesty for all the trouble your arbitrary attitude and your refusal may cause Her Majesty and she shall soon be told. You will find it out to your cost. For the last time, will you or will you not take my letter to Her Majesty?"

Surprised at Beaumarchais's tone, which seemed to come from a person of importance, and vaguely uneasy the Baron took the letter fuming:

"Very well, very well, I will take your letter. But it won't help you for I am certain the Empress will refuse to see you."

"That need not distress you," returned Beaumarchais.

Beaumarchais knew that he would now have to play cautiously. Nevertheless he already saw the end of his difficulties, the dawn of better days when he would retrieve his position and again be treated with consideration. Next day the Comte de Seilern, Counsellor to the Regency, sent a Court carriage for him. The Count received him more courteously and on learning that he was entrusted with a mission from Louis XVI and wished to see the Empress the Count himself conducted him, in the same Court carriage, to Schoenbrunn, the Empress's summer residence.

Beaumarchais was quickly ushered in, accompanied by Seilern, and after making obeisance drew out with a theatrical gesture his little gold box and the order in the King's handwriting which the Empress Maria Theresa, mother of Queen Marie Antoinette, at once recognised. Whether from emotion or playacting,

Beaumarchais seemed to be about to faint, and the Empress herself hastened to push forward a chair for him. When he recovered himself she said:

"You can speak freely before the Comte de Seilern who will readily help us both with his advice if necessary."

Beaumarchais was in a state of intense excitement. The conversation proceeded but the Empress, so he wrote later, seemed surprised at his story. And no wonder! At each fresh incident in the narrative the Empress, clasping her hands in surprise, repeated:

"But where did you acquire so ardent a zeal for the interests of my son-in-law and above all of my daughter?"

"Madame, I was one of the most unfortunate of men in France at the close of the last reign. The Queen, in those terrible times, did not disdain to show me some sympathy. In serving her now, without even the hope that she will ever know it, I am only discharging an immense debt. The greater the difficulty of the undertaking, the more eager I am for its success."

"But what necessity was there for you to change your name?"

"Madame, my own name unfortunately is only too well known throughout literary Europe . . . and wherever I appear under the name of Beaumarchais, whether I rouse interest, or compassion, or only curiosity, people visit me, invite me out, overwhelm me with attentions, and I am no longer free to work so secretly as the delicacy of my mission requires."

The Empress seemed curious to read the libel and asked him many questions about its innuendoes which friend Ronac was only too happy to give her. He even offered to have the mischievous work reprinted in Vienna, suppressing its malicious insinuations so that the King and Queen when they read it might not be unduly distressed, which was at least a fantastic idea. Moreover he urged the Empress to have a search made in Nuremberg without loss of time for the elusive Angelucci.

"But would that man have dared to show himself there knowing that you were going there yourself?" asked the Empress.

"Madame, as a fresh inducement to him to go there I deceived him by telling him that I was about to retrace my steps and return immediately to France."

The Empress was sceptical and Beaumarchais was undoubtedly suspect in her eyes. She gave no sign however and graciously thanked him for his "ardent and thoughtful" zeal and asked him to leave the brochure with her until the next day, adding:

"Go to bed and get bled without delay. It will not be forgotten here or in France how much zeal you have shown on this occasion in the service of the King and Queen."

The invitation to "get bled" might well have resulted from a doubt whether Beaumarchais was in full possession of his faculties. In short, the Empress gave orders for him to be driven back to his inn in the Court carriage. Then she summoned the Prince de Kaunitz,

the prime minister, and discussed the position with him and Seilern. Beaumarchais's feverish ardour, the scars on his face, the gold box round his neck, his no less amazing zeal gave rise to misgivings. The Prince de Kaunitz recommended a discreet and quick inquiry.

Beaumarchais returned to his inn proud of having "dished" so many persons, and not insignificant persons either, and still filled with the boundless zeal that he could expend at will since after all it was "all pretence." He prepared a number of ingenious notes to facilitate police search in Nuremberg. Truth to tell, he threw as much confusion into his notes as he could in order to send the police on a long chase and avert every possible doubt as to the existence of the too clever Angelucci and as to the carefully contrived tricks of the diplomat scheming to restore his lost honour.

Beaumarchais entrusted the delivery of his notes to the fat German driver who had been waiting in Vienna for some days to take him back to Paris. The Prince de Kaunitz seized the opportunity to question the man. He declared that he had seen no thieves, or any horseman on the road when Beaumarchais stopped the post-chaise, but that he had noticed him after the alarm putting away his razor.

In these circumstances the Prince was entitled to suppose either that Beaumarchais was deceiving M. de Sartines and his Government in addition to the Empress, or that he was mad, or that he had been

killed and robbed by an adventurer who had taken possession of his name and papers and his identity, and that it was with this man that the Empress had been dealing.

That evening Beaumarchais remained in his room in the inn expecting the return of the brochure in accordance with the promise made by the Empress and the Comte de Seilern that morning. At nine o'clock he heard the tramp of men on the stairs. Inquisitive, he half-opened his door. To his horror he saw before him eight grenadiers with fixed bayonets, and two officers with drawn swords, and a secretary who bore a polite letter from the Comte de Seilern inviting him to allow himself to be arrested, promising to explain later his reasons for this decision which he would not fail to approve.

Beaumarchais was first overwhelmed with consternation and then indignant. He crumpled up the letter, flew into a passion, inveighed against the secretary who was merely obeying his orders, and demanded the reason for his arrest which the poor man was unable to furnish.

"No resistance!" he said.

"I sometimes offer resistance to thieves but never to Emperors!" exclaimed Beaumarchais.

He was not searched but seals were placed on his papers and on the valise containing what remained of the fourteen hundred pounds. He had been living on this money since his departure from Amsterdam and had paid the driver for his journey. Moreover he may

have had a considerable sum on him as he had written to M. de Sartines from Amsterdam stating that he was short of money and had sold his jewelry. He had no jewelry nor had he sold anything. He invented jewelry and sale to account for his expenditure during his travels. In short, seals were placed on all his property, except that which he was carrying on him, and it was loaded into the post-chaise. A few days later driver and post-chaise escorted by an officer and a grenadier set out for Paris. The officer was the bearer of a long report on the result of the inquiries made in Vienna and Nuremberg.

As to the hapless diplomatist, he was kept in close custody and guarded by four grenadiers relieved twice a day. Moreover in view of his violent demeanour his pistol as well as his razor, knife and scissors were taken away lest he should turn them against himself. He could once more "measure time" as in the days of his youth. . . . Next day the secretary came to see him and tried to pacify him:

"There is no rest for me until I have written to the Empress. What has happened to me is extraordinary. Let me have pens and paper or prepare to chain me up soon for this is enough to drive me mad."

He was allowed pens and paper and he started to blacken many sheets in letters to the Empress and Sartines and in reassuring his family. He was not quite easy as to where his fate would lead him. All things considered, he concluded that his one mistake was to have shown too much zeal, played the farce with too

much gusto. He concluded, too, that no inquiry even if his luggage were examined could prove his culpability. If the worst came to the worst it might be believed, on the strength of the driver's word, that he had invented the story of brigands. As to Angelucci himself, there was no possibility of any trouble. He had taken every precaution. In reality, the adventure had admirably served its purpose and his merits in the eyes of the King would be enhanced by his imprisonment. Therefore he wrote to Sartines and the Empress dwelling little on himself but emphasising "the horrible blunder which was being committed in Vienna against the interests of His Majesty." After a week of "the deadly agony of suspense," a Counsellor of the Regency was sent to question him.

"I protest against the violence which is being done to me here in contempt of all justice," he exclaimed dramatically. "I came to appeal to maternal solicitude and I find myself crushed beneath the weight of imperial authority."

The Counsellor smiled and said:

"Put your complaints in writing and I will undertake to lay them before the Comte de Seilern who will doubtless convey them to the Empress."

Beaumarchais took up his pen and still omitting any personal complaint cleverly dealt with the matter from the point of view of the royal interests alone. He added a number of details about Angelucci and expressed misgivings as to his future proceedings.

Three long weeks went by. Beaumarchais had

now recovered his composure. He faced the position philosophically, perceiving that in the end he had nothing to lose. While still making a show of uneasiness before his guards, he asked to see the doctor and allowed himself to be attended by him. He was well treated; the barber came daily to shave him and dress his hair; he asked to be allowed to read and books were provided for him. In short, he was living at the Empress's expense though no word was uttered about his fate.

At last, on the 21st of September, he received a letter from M. de Sartines, and the Counsellor who brought it to him with an obsequious smile said that a diplomatic blunder had been made and would have to be atoned for as far as possible, adding:

"You are at liberty to stay or to leave here according to your desire or your health."

"If I were to die on the road I would not stay another quarter of an hour in Vienna."

He was offered one thousand ducats as a gift from the Empress. He refused "with firmness but without pride" to accept them.

"But your property is no longer here. Everything is in Paris."

"That's all right. I will give my bill for what I cannot avoid borrowing for my journey."

"An Empress does not lend money."

"And I can accept nothing. I will accept nothing from a foreign power by which I have been so infamously treated."

MARIE-ANTOINETTE
Madame Vigée-Lebrun
In the Museum of Versailles

He was ultimately obliged to accept, at least provisionally, the thousand ducats; and he found a post-chaise which nine days later landed him in Paris with a small bag containing a few necessaries.

He was received with open arms at the Lépine's where his father and Julie, to whom word had been sent, came in all haste. Old M. Caron told his youthful Pierre with a smile that he was once again—it was his third venture—about to be married: this time to an old friend, a widow, with whom he had been staying. The young buck was in his seventy-seventh year!

Beaumarchais scarcely gave himself time to embrace his family before he changed his clothes and drove to M. de Sartines's office. Sartines's letter to him in Vienna was very short, intimating only that the Empress had taken him for an adventurer, and that he had received an alarming and compromising report about him—and no wonder!—but that having confidence in his protégé the Lieutenant General of Police at once requested his release. Obviously Sartines was disconcerted by the incident. Beaumarchais's story of the brigands had amused and somewhat surprised him. But then he had received so many shocks of surprise since he became friends with Beaumarchais. When all was said, he was bound up with him, and however crushing the charges brought against him at the instance of the Prince de Kaunitz, he could do no other than request that the prisoner be sent back. To disown him would be to jeopardise his own place when

Marie Antoinette was informed of the circumstances. But not until he received a letter from Beaumarchais sent off from the last posting stage on the 23rd of September, 1774, announcing his return, was he entirely reassured on his own account. He had no wish, of course, to provoke Beaumarchais and had refrained from touching the valises and luggage dispatched from Vienna under seal by the Austrian Government, and thus when Beaumarchais came to see him they were handed over to him intact.

Sartines showed him the Prince de Kaunitz's report and the evidence of the driver, the Burgomaster of Nuremberg, and the landlord of the Coq Rouge Inn. The latter had thought he was mad. They both laughed heartily, but Beaumarchais was still surprised by it all. His disordered garb, his gold box round his neck, his change of name, his wounds, his air of mystery, his excitement, his incredible and assiduous zeal—all these things seemed to him quite ordinary and in no sense of a nature to arouse suspicion. For three months he had been living in the world of fiction, and they were as nothing compared with the efforts of his fertile mind, the plentiful resources of his imagination sown broadcast between London and Vienna. He found it difficult to adapt his tone to a less fanciful state of things, and yet in this affair he had come as near the scaffold as in the Goëzman case. He deserved it; he had no illusions about that. It was a first-rate piece of trickery admirably conceived and carried through, demanding greater prudence, a more circum-

spect intelligence, a livelier imagination than the destruction of any actual libel. It was a remarkable ruse, pardonable perhaps if not justified from the fact that he had been the victim of so many tricks of late, from the fact, too, that so many persons had foully and basely driven him to the very gates of death. If he was still alive he owed it to his own wits. He was dead in law for he had been deprived of his civil rights, disgraced by a "blame" and the infamous scandal that covered his name. He was ruined and his family, of whom for twenty years he was the sole support, scattered and in distress. He had not deserved so cruel a fate, and might have suffered for the rest of his life had he not played this comedy at his own risk and peril, and, without injuring any single person, taken from the Treasury a part of that which he had been unjustly forced to disburse. All the same he was no longer playing Figaro—he was playing Scapin. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

"First I have had to do the play,
Often undo it the next day."

Couplet on *The Barber of Seville.*

WITHOUT doubt he was now safe. He drew up a lengthy report on his adventures for the King and submitted it on the 15th of October, 1774. Though governments may be long in showing their appreciation, Louis XVI was bound sooner or later to reward him by doing justice to him, if indeed to do justice to a man is to reward him.

At the end of his letter Beaumarchais raised the question of the Empress's thousand ducats which he refused to keep:

"I venture to hope, sire, that your Majesty will not disapprove of my persistent refusal of the Empress's money, and will permit me to send it back to Vienna. I might have looked upon it as a sort of flattering amend for the error into which they had fallen on my account had I received a kind message from the Empress or her portrait or any similar mark of honour with which I could have met the reproaches which are made against me everywhere, of having been arrested in Vienna as a suspicious character. But money, sire! It is the height of humiliation for me and I do not think

that I deserved it as the reward for the activity, zeal, and courage with which I have fulfilled to the best of my ability my most difficult commission."

He was rhetorical in every phase of his life. As to his modesty it would be as well to say nothing. The thousand ducats were returned and a magnificent diamond sent him in exchange through M. de Mercy, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris, and he was authorised to wear it as a gift from the Empress, a permission which he did not fail to boast about to the outside world.

When all is said extraordinary luck was with him even in his misfortunes. No one, not even himself, could have hoped to climb so quickly and brilliantly the rungs of the ladder from which he had fallen four years before. A little more than eighteen months had sufficed. He himself helped circumstances as we have seen, but circumstances also helped him. Maurepas, exiled after the close of Louis XV's reign and summoned to the place of honour by Louis XVI, had often met him at Court and at Etioles in his early days. He appreciated his qualities and took a keen enjoyment in his society. He himself had some pretensions to wit—he was exiled for ridiculing Mme. du Barry in a song—and he was captivated by Beaumarchais's wit. His friend Sartines was promoted from the Police to a more important position at the Ministry of the Navy. M. de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, too, was well disposed towards him. Therefore he struggled to advance in favour with the governing powers. Maure-

pas loved a joke and Beaumarchais shouldered the task of keeping him amused for the rest of his days, and it was through Maurepas that he was to obtain his heart's desire.

As it happened Louis XVI and his new ministers, to the general satisfaction, desired to re-establish the old Parliament. Maupeou had already been dismissed and was eating his heart out between Rueil and Chatou where he was often to be met. But the King's ministers were unable to agree as to the conditions upon which the old Parliament should be recalled so that it might be of real advantage without adversely affecting the royal authority. Maurepas in accord with the other ministers consulted Beaumarchais and asked him—he knew his qualities and defects—to write a short, simple Memorial in which his principles, set forth without verbosity or embellishment, would be likely to impress men of goodwill in need of instruction. Within two weeks Beaumarchais had composed a brochure which he called *Elementary Ideas on the Recall of the Parliament.* He delivered it and read his draft copy to the Prince de Conti, an ardent adherent of the former system. It was a great success.

In the meantime Goëzman had fallen on evil days and Marin was dismissed from the *Gazette de France.* Beaumarchais continued to cultivate Sartines and strove to gain ground by untiringly reminding him of his services and their object. On the 11th of December, 1774, he wrote:

JEAN FREDERICK DE MAUREPAS

After the painting by Van Los

"I have covered over eighteen hundred leagues since the month of March last. That is good going I think. I have silenced three monsters by destroying two libels and putting a stop to the printing of a third. To do this I have allowed my own affairs to go to rack and ruin. I have been tricked, robbed, assaulted, imprisoned and my health is impaired. But what does it matter if the King is satisfied? May he say only *I am satisfied* and I shall be the most contented person in the world.

"I still hope you do not wish to leave me with the *blame* upon me of this villainous Parliament which you have just buried beneath the rubbish-heap of its dishonour. The whole of Europe has indeed avenged me for this infamous and absurd judgment; but this is not sufficient. I must have a decree demolishing the sentence of the Parliament. I am going to work for it with all the moderation of a man who no longer fears either intrigue or injustice. I wait your good offices towards this important end.

"Your devoted servant,

"BEAUMARCHAIS."

The Maupeou Parliament was "buried" a fortnight before. Beaumarchais recovered his courage. He at once petitioned for the annulment of the judgment made on Goëzman's report in the La Blache case. He wrote another short Memorial, but he could not refrain from digging his claws into the Maupeou Parliament and La Blache so that no lawyer of the State Council

would countersign it as the law demanded. Under pressure he reduced it to a simple legal application, but with his usual obstinacy intrigued with M. de Miromesnil, the Minister of Justice, to obtain authority to publish his dissertation against La Blache as "necessary to his justification." And he succeeded in his object thanks to this influence. The decision of the Court was postponed for a week, in fact, to allow him the necessary time. The demon of intrigue was still egging him on; he was never one to profit by experience, and he blew his own trumpet with the same recklessness, the same asperity as twelve months before. He knew nothing of modesty and self-effacement, he was incapable of shame or reserve in his private life. A public Memorial was wholly unnecessary in the circumstances, and its sale out of place besides being totally opposed to custom.

For ever and for ever he's the same. No sooner was he back in Paris than he wrote a mad song to attract the attention of the public whom he had not entertained for nearly six months. And was not the extra verse added to it by an enemy deserved?

For ever and for ever he's the same,
  This lewd fellow,
  Who thinks himself a beau;
  His songs distinctly show
How impudent his game;
  When Justice strikes him down
  He doesn't even frown:
For ever and for ever he's the same!

On the 22nd of January, 1775, he circulated

his Memorial. He examined thoroughly the final statement of account with Duverney, showed its simplicity and his own good faith, and proved to the point of redundancy the complete genuineness of the deed and the no less complete iniquity of the judgment. On the 28th of January the Court annulled it. But Beaumarchais very nearly lost his case. He was severely censured for the offensive language of his Memorial and its sale by the booksellers was prohibited. The King meant to read it and it rested with him in the last resort to forbid its circulation if there was good reason. On the 4th of February the King decided that the suppression of the Memorial should stand and Beaumarchais received an order prohibiting him from placing it on sale. He was within an ace of alienating the King's goodwill. Meantime in spite of his loudly expressed objections when the Empress offered him a thousand ducats he had pocketed on two occasions thirty thousand francs of French money from Louis XVI "for having destroyed a wicked libel. . . ."

Another turn of the wheel of fortune! At last he succeeded, owing chiefly to the influence of the Queen, in removing the ban on *The Barber of Seville* and Figaro, after a delay of two years, was at last to make his appearance on the stage. The first performance was announced for Thursday the 23rd of February. He had kept his play ready for over three years. To begin with he had composed a number of little farces and improvisations, more or less pantomimic and

ribald, for performance at Le Normand's house in Etioles where this kind of private theatricals was highly popular. It was on one of these trifles, the best of them without doubt, that he founded his comic opera, utilising for the purpose a number of ariettas brought back from Spain some years before, and grafting on them his own licentious and quizzical songs. *Le Precaution Inutile*[1] by Noland de Fatouville, a clever author too soon sunk into oblivion, and *On ne s'Avise Jamais de Tout*[2] by Sedaine undoubtedly provided the groundwork for his own piece.

His comic opera, as we know, was rejected by the Italian players, and he was advised at a dinner party at Mlle. Ménard's to transform it into a play for the Comédie Française. Therefore he eliminated a number of songs, left others as they were, and the revised play was accepted by the Comédie Française. It then consisted of four acts and contained an abundance of coarse humour, but it was entirely innocuous as far as the Government, the established order, and morals were concerned. Marin as censor passed it and that was saying a great deal! In 1773 the quarrel with the Duc de Chaulnes occurred. In 1774 the piece was banned on the ground that it contained an onslaught on the magistracy but that was untrue. In 1775 it was subjected to a drastic change. Beaumarchais sought to recoup himself for the unjust prohibition of the year before by introducing all those satirical innuendoes whose effect the authorities had feared.

[1] *The Useless Precaution.* [2] *People Never Think of Everything.*

It was without doubt a system of his, a kind of legitimate method of turning the tables, prompted by the same reasoning which had impelled him to devise his diplomatic hoax: "I am called a rogue, a thief and a liar. I am not one or the other. To show the people that they are right let me act as such. My play is said to contain attacks and allusions which are not in it. Let me put them in." Thus he took every liberty, which was scarcely in good taste since the powers that be had licensed a play of four quite harmless acts and not the play of five acts which, setting authority at defiance, he presented on the 23rd of February. His play was saturated with bitter and ruthless gibes at the times and the Courts; he added to it the famous eulogy of slander delivered by Basil; overlaid it with tirades, jeers and innuendoes against all and sundry and long drawn out and varied scenes of unnecessary prolixity. He was deservedly chastened.

He might have counted on a success for this play promised so often during the last two years, the delight of more than one literary salon and, it was whispered, lively and witty and worthy of the author of the Memorials. The crowd indeed which flocked to see it was enormous and the first night throng was greater than those which besieged Voltaire's most famous tragedies. And yet apart from the first act which was well received, the performance was broken by hisses, cries, and protests, and the audience left the theatre intensely disillusioned.

Beaumarchais was too self-opinionated to acknowl-

edge defeat. His friends advised him to prune the play, overladen with detail and wearisome as it was. The actors themselves asked for a number of cuts and a return to the four act form. Beaumarchais grumbled and reluctantly applied himself to the alterations. These consisted in the main of tearing up a number of loose leaves added to the original manuscript. . . . And now the play, curtailed to four acts, was redolent of gaiety and wit and humour. It had gained immensely in this its final text.

The second performance was on the 26th of February. The play was applauded to the skies in its new dress. The public was amazed at the rapidity and dexterity with which the changes had been made. The performance on Shrove Tuesday, the 28th of February, was an equal success. The public assuredly approved it and Beaumarchais was hailed as the legitimate successor of Molière. His friends said that he had made every sacrifice to please the public and his enemies retorted that he would have done better to sacrifice the play. For his part he hummed a few lines on the piece as it was performed at the Comédie Française on the 23rd of February, 1775:

> First I have had to do the play,
> Often undo it the next day,
> Do it again the actor's way,
> Not overdo the things I say,
> Repeat, reiterate, relay—
> What do I get for all my pay?
> The pit—uproariously gay—
> A world of critics held at bay;

Then—final kick to my dismay—
The journals rush into the fray.
Ah! what a wretched trade is mine!
I'd sooner as a barber shine,
A barber . . .
bar . . . ber
shine!

Of the additions to the play in its five act form as it was presented with such untoward results to the public, Beaumarchais allowed but a few lines to remain: the famous tirade on slander and farther on Basil's remark to Bartholo:

"You have been mean enough over the expenses, and in the harmony of good order, an unequal marriage, an obvious injustice, *an iniquitous sentence* are dissonances which ought always to be made good and mitigated by the perfect chord of gold."

But the supreme creation was Figaro—the amazing character of Figaro. We know him, we have long known him, for he wears the physiognomy of Beaumarchais himself. So conspicuously indeed that to the story of his adventures in 1772, "tired of writing, bored with myself, disgusted with others, overwhelmed with debts and light of purse," he added in 1775, "welcomed in one town, *imprisoned* in another and everywhere rising superior to events, praised on one side, *blamed* on the other." In enumerating the enemies of men of letters from whom he had suffered—"the insects, the mosquitoes, the critics, the censors"—he added in 1775 the *maringouins*. In certain places in his manuscript he crossed out the name of Basil and

replaced it with Goëzman, but the allusion to him was too flagrant, too dangerous, and he regretfully restored the first name.

Apart from his own character of Figaro he dealt with the events of his time. He made Bartholo say: "Barbarous age! . . . What has it produced that we should sing its praises? Follies of all sorts: liberty of thought, the law of gravitation, electricity, religious toleration, inoculation, quinine, the encyclopædia, and plays!"

He brought within due limits his long string of epithets. The portrait of Bartholo in the five act version was too highly coloured and he suppressed the second part as well as that of Rosina which was the match of it:

FIGARO: He is a nice, fat, short, young-old man, dapple grey, clean shaven, sly, blasé, of an age to contract a marriage. A widower for the second time and no longer the gallant novice. He wants to begin all over again the bright young spark. But he is the craftiest creature imaginable.

THE COUNT: Never mind. How do they get on together?

FIGARO: Like a kitten and a mangy dog tied up in the same bag—always fighting. How could it be otherwise? She is a darling, foolish, engaging, fresh, appetising, with a skin as soft as velvet, plump arms, whitish hands, rosy lips, the sweetest breath and such cheeks and eyes and teeth. . . . Always facing

that old libertine, pimpled, boring, sprightly, as though amorous from childhood, wrinkled, bleareyed, jealous, silly, a poor devil who coughs and spits and growls and whines in turn. . . ."

The Barber of Seville had an honourable career; it was played twenty times in succession. But one man was perturbed by the scene so cleverly introduced towards the end of the third act when Basil is sent to bed. It was Voltaire. Voltaire of all men! His tragedy *Irène* was in rehearsal and the heroine's father was called Basil. Beaumarchais's Basil achieved so great a success that during the later performances the audience was wont to shout from the pit at the beginning of the scene: "Basil go to bed!" and Voltaire's play owing to the use of the same name ran the risk of being greeted with the same shouts. It would have ruined his play and he thought it prudent to change the name of Irene's father to Léonce. As luck would have it no line of verse in his piece ended in Basil so that it suffered neither in rhyme nor reason.

CHAPTER IX

"An old she-dragoon."

BEAUMARCHAIS ON D'EON.

CUPID was never likely to be altogether absent from the thoughts of Beaumarchais. As he could no longer see Mlle. Ménard without involving himself in new difficulties, he became enamoured of Mlle. Doligny, another charming actress of the Théâtre Français. He had cast her for the delightful part of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. He appreciated her artistic performance at the rehearsals and their attachment ripened. For her sake and at her request he put a more delicate touch in the part of this charming ingénue while his "dear little Doligny" as he called her sat on his knees with her arms round his neck. She was a pretty, fascinating, lively, fairhaired, rosy complexioned theatrical doll.

In addition to this trifling diversion he had another love affair of the more intellectual sort though he did not disdain its physical attractions. A young girl of twenty, of Swiss extraction, the daughter of a public official, and an acquaintance of a friend of his, enraptured by reading the Memorials, particularly the fourth Memorial, and the Clavigo incident described in it,

determined at all hazards to become acquainted with the author.

A mutual friend called on him:

"One of my young lady friends plays the harp rather well, but her instrument is under repair. She greatly misses it and wants you to lend her yours for a time. . . . In reality," he went on in confidence, perceiving Beaumarchais's look of astonishment at the strange request, "I believe she is longing to know you. What is more, she is charming and well educated."

"Well," returned Beaumarchais with a smile, "tell her that I never lend anything but if she cares to come here with you I shall be happy to hear her play, and play something myself too."

The shy and blushing young lady came. Gudin, who prided himself on his knowledge of women, thought highly of her. Beaumarchais appreciated both her beauty and her talent as a musician. Smiling pleasantly under her Quésaco hat—it was the latest fashion in feminine head-dress and its name was derived from Beaumarchais's ridicule of Marin—she played to perfection a number of pieces transposed from Bach. Beaumarchais played in his turn. They were both pleased, and the reputation of the great man, no less fascinating at close quarters than when seen through the medium of his Memorials, kindled the tender passion in this young and generous heart. Quickly caught in the toils of this Lovelace, Marie Thérèse Villermawlaz became his mistress in spite of the difference of twenty-three years in their ages. She

succeeded in some measure in keeping a rein upon him, impelling him to live a less frivolous life. Of a naturally lovable temperament, Marie was, so his sister Julie, a determined old maid, declared, an example of "French frivolity on a pedestal of Swiss dignity."

The winter theatrical season finished at the Théâtre Français every year at Lent, and the theatre was reopened after Easter. It was the custom on the last night to deliver a complimentary address to the spectators. *The Barber of Seville* was played until the close of the season. Beaumarchais wrote, in place of the usual complimentary discourse, a farce in one act which was presented with success on the 29th of March, the date of the last performance of the season.

Beaumarchais was already engaged on an opera, and he invited Gluck, then in Paris, to compose the music for it, and also for a sequel to *The Barber of Seville* in which Figaro would still be the principal figure. In this sequel he intended to retain the character of the author of his being who, in the fullness of his experience, was already putting on paper for his character a number of tirades even more applicable to Beaumarchais himself nine years later when *The Marriage of Figaro* was performed. But at that very time he was writing in these terms:

FIGARO: To pretend to be ignorant of what you know, to know what you know nothing about, to understand what no one can comprehend, not to comprehend what you understand, above all to pretend to powers

beyond your capacity, to affect great secrecy while there is nothing to conceal, to shut yourself up in your room to mend your pens, to seem profound when you are merely empty and hollow, to pretend somehow or other to be a somebody, to send out spies and pension traitors, to tamper with seals and intercept letters, to try to exalt the crookedness of the means by the importance of the ends—that is the whole art of politics or I am a dead man!

THE COUNT: Well, you have described intrigue.

FIGARO: Politics, intrigue, if you will, but I look upon them as pretty well synonymous terms. Let him set his hand to them who will!

And later on:

FIGARO: Oh, what a strange succession of events! How came they to happen to me? Why these things and not others? Who has brought them down on my head? Compelled to follow the path into which I entered without knowing it, just as I shall have to leave it against my will, I have strewn it with as many flowers as my gaiety allowed. I repeat *my* gaiety not knowing whether it is mine any more than anything else, nor even what is this *I* with which I am concerned. A shapeless conglomeration of unknown parts, then a puny unintelligent creature, a frolicsome little animal, a young man ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, with every capacity for enjoyment, following every trade in order to live,

master here, valet there as it pleased fortune! Ambitious through vanity, laborious from necessity but delighting in indolence, an orator when threatened with danger, a poet by diversion, a musician by chance, a lover by mad fits and starts, I have seen everything, done everything, worn out everything! . . .

How very like a revelation of himself with the qualities and defects of the sentimental Bohemian and the vices of the cynical man of affairs!

Another turn of fortune's wheel! While he was taking a rest from the excitement of the last four years in literary composition, a number of fresh libels, genuine ones this time, were being prepared in London by certain poor wretches. Obviously no assistance except passive good will could be counted on from Lord Rochford.

Louis XVI, satisfied with his "diplomatic jockey who only asked for his bread and a horse to ride," entrusted him once more with the task of suppressing these libellous publications. Beaumarchais was never any too pleased to embark upon these police missions and invariably strove to embellish them with some entirely diplomatic or ingenious purpose more to his credit from which he could afterwards reap some personal honour with the public.

Still influenced by the importance of regaining his civil rights and his honourable position as a gentleman merchant, he accepted this third mission and on

the 8th of April, 1775, a week after the performance of his complimentary one act farce at the Théâtre Français, set out for London for the sixth time within the year. Hardly had he arrived when his identity was disclosed and he received anonymous letters advising him to return to France as soon as might be under pain of death. He had the letters published in the newspapers, and walked abroad openly under his own name calculated though it was to arouse curiosity. He quickly made his investigations helped by Lord Rochford, and the writers of the libels found themselves in prison.

He was received more or less everywhere, and made a study of English politics and in particular English foreign policy. It was a critical period. French possessions in America were menaced by British imperialism, and the English colonists of America were preparing to break with the mother country whose laws and commercial system were paralysing their trade. Thoroughly to understand the position so as to hold itself in readiness to assist, secretly if needs be, in the weakening of British hegemony in American waters was obviously an imperative necessity to the French Government. Beaumarchais grasped the fact and intended to make himself useful, essential, adequate to the occasion. He wrote to Louis XVI direct, contrary to the usual custom, on the 27th of April:

"I am in a position to give the soundest information on the action of the English Government regarding the English colonies and the effect of the upheaval in these colonies in England; on what must be the conse-

quences to one and the other; on the supreme importance of these events to French interests; on what we have to hope or fear for our sugar islands; on what can give us peace or bring about war. . . ."

Here his zeal was of some use. He asked only of the King for the moment "not to abandon me to the resentment, the animosity of ministers and courtiers who would do all they could to ruin me if they were to learn that I have submitted reports to Your Majesty without sending them through the usual channel."

And now the wheel of fortune turned again.

Beaumarchais's destiny seemed always to lure in its wake the most astonishing personalities and Charles Geneviève, Louis, Augusta, André, Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont—all these names for one person—was indubitably at that time the most fantastic character in France, Navarre and the British Isles.

Every one knows that the grotesque mystification connected with the Chevalier d'Eon was one of the strangest incidents in the history of the eighteenth century. Ex-advocate, ex-dragoon, ex-Secretary of Embassy in London, a redoubtable duellist, a Chevalier of St. Louis for his exploits in war, the Chevalier d'Eon in 1776 had a violent quarrel with M. de Guerchy, the French Ambassador in London, which threatened to end in a duel and a scandal. Louis XV was advised to have d'Eon spirited away and he consented but his old friendship for him led him to warn the Chevalier who frustrated every ministerial and police manœuvre and

CHEVALIER D'EON

From a mezzotint by Cooper

continued to live in London as Louis XV's private spy. A clandestine correspondence, cautiously worded, remained in d'Eon's possession. It concerned a policy of revenge for the treaty of peace of 1763, the luckless treaty of Paris. It dealt with no less than a plan of descent on England conceived by the Duc de Broglie and examined secretly by Louis XV, in which d'Eon had rendered highly useful service. Louis XV granted him a pension but when that monarch died the pension came to an end. At that time d'Eon was a man of forty-seven, overwhelmed with debt, without a pension, with scarcely any means of earning his living in England, and furthermore debarred from returning to France. Since his quarrel with Guerchy which had brought him into the limelight, it was whispered that d'Eon was a woman and that Louis XV himself was well aware of the fact. The rumour was the relic of a diplomatic masquerade of far-off days, taken seriously, when Louis XV is said to have made use of d'Eon, at that time a very young man, for a mission to the Court of Elizabeth of Russia when "she" was supposed to have become Elizabeth's reader. As it happened d'Eon had a woman's voice and a fresh-coloured complexion.

Was Louis XV himself responsible for allowing the idea to spring up that d'Eon was a woman at the moment of the quarrel with de Guerchy because he had no wish to be harsh to this diplomatist whom he had employed with advantage? Had he himself endowed him with a petticoat and was he the originator of the mystification? That was the question! One thing

was certain. From 1771 the most contradictory rumours were afloat regarding d'Eon, and heavy wagers were laid in London and France on this question of sex. Possibly acting under Louis XV's instructions d'Eon allowed these doubts to subsist, and thus opinion leant more and more in favour of the theory of femininity.

Louis XV died; d'Eon was in debt; his pension ceased. If he allowed it to be established that he was a man he would remain in disgrace and perhaps even sooner or later be thrown into the Bastille. If he declared that he was a woman and was in possession of important letters, compromising the memory of Louis XV and his ministers, he might hope to receive an offer for them. In point of fact negotiations had been entered into but had come to nothing. The first plenipotentiary failed to obtain reasonable terms; the second flirted with the ex-dragoon and promised a dowry of one hundred thousand crowns if "she" would marry him. D'Eon refused and with good reason.

But his debts were still unpaid and in his poverty he scented the possibility of winning a pension for his old age by selling at a price a correspondence the compromising character of which was disappearing with the flight of time. He grasped the fact more fully than any one else. On his part, Beaumarchais wrote to Sartines in November, 1774: "The secret of d'Eon is not to have one, to deceive those who think of surprising it, to pocket one hundred thousand

crowns, and to remain in London." The wily Figaro was himself deceived on these points. He believed that d'Eon was a woman but he did not believe in the existence of any secret.

Beaumarchais apparently had proclaimed a little too freely in London his opinion on d'Eon's sex. Be that as it may, one fine evening d'Eon sent in his name to Ploone Street. Beaumarchais, on tenterhooks of curiosity, received the "lady Chevalier" with the great courtesy invariably shown by him to women. He had never seen d'Eon and based his opinion of "her" entirely upon his own convictions.

"I have not the honour of being known to you," began d'Eon, "but I have come to see you because I feel that sooner or later I shall have business with you. I have no doubt the government which sent you here has entrusted you with a more or less diplomatic mission on my account."

"Why no, mademoiselle. I have not received any orders concerning you."

At this point d'Eon spoke with sobs in his voice:

"You have before you an unhappy woman who . . ."

"Oh, really, you are a woman?"

"Alas, yes, an unhappy woman who was forced through the fault of covetous parents to whom the property of one of my uncles would have been lost in default of a male heir, to keep up the appearance of a man when she is really a woman. My goodness, I am greatly to be pitied. Almost an old woman now, inured

to the hard life of camps, I shall never know what it is to love, and my old age will be spent in dire poverty if no one comes to my rescue. I should so much like to go back to France, and my return would be in His Majesty's interests. Had you been entrusted with any mission I feel sure that we should have come to terms. I ought to have returned to my native land long ago and the King would have received the important confidential letters regarding Louis XV which ought not to remain in England. If I stay here without assistance, it will mean poverty and death before long. And when the English Government learns what is in these letters it will inevitably rekindle the war between England and France. See, I have these letters with me and I will show them to you, and you will realise the position for yourself."

D'Eon drew from every seam of his clothes letters from Louis XV, and letters and plans from the Duc de Broglie and placed them before Beaumarchais. Seated at his desk Beaumarchais examined them with interest and care. If he were able to restore them to Louis XVI without scaring the Chevalier and succeed where others had failed what a triumph would be his!

For his part, d'Eon bit his lips to prevent himself from laughing at this man alleged to be so shrewd and cautious, a negotiator and diplomatist of the first rank. Standing behind the chair of the "little minister" the ex-dragoon kept a sharp eye on him to hold him in check should he endeavour to seize the documents. But no such intention entered Beaumarchais's mind.

The Chevalier d'Eon went on:

"I have every confidence in you and I shall be happy if I am to owe my peace of mind in my old age to you. These letters, you see, represent only a small fraction of those in my possession which are still more compromising. I ask you to do me the favour of sending these to the Prince de Conti whom I once knew very well, begging him to intervene with the King on my behalf. I ask only the payment of my debts, an allowance to live on and permission to go back to France."

"I will refer to my government for instructions. I will send your letter to the Duc de Broglie and your packet of letters to the Prince de Conti, and I have no doubt when the government learns that you are favourably disposed they will give you satisfaction."

When d'Eon stepped into the street again and, looking up at the lighted window, caught sight of the dark shadow of Beaumarchais pacing up and down the room he laughed. He drew out his pipe, filled and lit it and strode off muttering: "By God, isn't it funny the way these fellows take me for a Venus?"

A year before d'Eon had sent to M. de Vergennes an extravagant bill in which in addition to the payment of his debts he claimed to be a creditor of the French Treasury for some two hundred thousand francs.

"In November, 1757," wrote d'Eon, "the present King of Poland being Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic, in Russia, sent to M. d'Eon, Secretary of the

French Embassy, a note enclosing a diamond valued at six thousand francs, in the hope that M. d'Eon would inform him of a very interesting affair which was then being hatched in St. Petersburg. The latter made it his duty to show the note and the diamond to the Marquis de l'Hospital, the Ambassador, and to take back the said diamond to the Comte de Poniatowski who in his rage threw it into the fire.

"The Marquis de l'Hospital, touched by M. d'Eon's honourable attitude, wrote about it to Cardinal de Bernis who promised to obtain for him a grant of like value from the King as a reward for his integrity, but Cardinal de Bernis having been ejected from office and exiled, M. d'Eon never received the grant which he thinks he is entitled to claim, namely 6000 francs.

"The Comte de Guerchy prevented the King of England from making M. d'Eon a present of one thousand gold pieces which he grants to plenipotentiaries residing at his Court, namely 24,000 francs.

"Again, not having been in a position from 1763 to 1773 to attend to his vine plantations in Burgundy, M. d'Eon has not only lost an income of one thousand crowns but also all his vines, and considers he may put this loss down to one half its real amount, namely 15,000 francs.

"Moreover M. d'Eon, without entering into the account which he might produce of the immense expenses caused by his residence in London from 1763 until the present year 1773, both for the maintenance and support of his late cousin and himself and for the

entire ordinary expenses which circumstances demanded, thinks he ought to restrict himself to claiming the cost of keeping up in London a simple suitable establishment in which a person limits himself to necessaries and servants; and consequently he estimates the cost at the moderate sum of 480 Tournois livres making for the said ten years 100,000 francs."

He omitted of course all mention of the pension paid to him since his retirement from the army the sum total of which was 96,000 francs.

After a rough crossing from Dover to Boulogne Beaumarchais reached Paris again on the 23rd of April. On the 27th he wrote a special letter to the King sending it as usual through Sartines. It contained in particular reflections of this sort:

"When one thinks that this creature, so greatly persecuted, is of a sex to which everything is forgiven, the heart is moved to a great pity, . . . I venture to assure you, Sire, that by treating this astonishing creature with tact and kindness, though she be soured by twelve years' misfortune, she may easily be brought to give back all the papers relating to the late King on reasonable terms."

He discussed the subject with Maurepas and Vergennes, both of whom had a liking and steady friendship for him. Soon he departed once more for England to round off his mission in respect of the libels and to obtain from d'Eon more precise details, hoping in the meantime to secure the King's intervention in his own case. Moreover he continued to follow closely English

politics and since he met all sorts and conditions of persons to gather knowledge from every source.

With amazing diligence he classified his notes, mapped out his time, interviewed and heard the views of many persons, followed closely the debates in the Houses of Parliament, and in particular collected information about the possible consequences to France of the revolt of the American colonies which was developing. Aloof as he was from political parties he was able to grasp the essential facts in this quarrel daily becoming more bitter. For some time he had been gathering together his "reflections" and whether they were concerned with moral, political, economic or literary subjects they showed uncommon powers of insight. Among his observations were:

"An incidental sedition may be remediable but not a general upheaval which inevitably springs from the nature of things, and this is the present position between England and America. America has doubled her population in nineteen years. America has opened up communications with the Southern continent and the Gulf of Mexico. She can very well do without the mother country if needs be. Is there any barrier to her separation now? It can only be delayed for it is being brought about by natural means and not by the spirit of infatuation or treason. . . ."

Remaining on terms of friendship with Lord Rochford, now Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—he held the office only a few months—Beaumarchais knew very easily how to make him speak out. Lord

JOHN WILKES

From the engraving by T. Cook after the design by W. Hogarth

Rochford would unloose his tongue when he got proper encouragement, and Beaumarchais was the man to give it. He was not less friendly with John Wilkes, the Lord Mayor of London, a man very much like himself—with this difference, that Wilkes was wanting both in private and public morality. A rich man, he entertained largely and one evening when Beaumarchais was seated beside him at dinner he said in a loud voice, speaking of American affairs and a recent proclamation by King George III which declared the Americans rebels: "The King of England has long done me the honour of hating me. For my part, I have always rendered him the justice of despising him. The time has come for deciding which of us has formed the best opinion of the other and on which side the wind will cause heads to fall." Even if the insolent assurance of this man, who through his wide connections and his gift for intrigue exercised a great influence over the opinion of other men, were reduced to proper proportion it meant that the worst was feared.

As to d'Eon, he continued to play the part of old maid with uncommon skill, and Beaumarchais continued to allow himself to be duped with uncommon simplicity. The best of it was that he prided himself on his cleverness and, as a diplomat worthy of the name, neglected no precaution in his dealings with this "crafty and violent old woman." D'Eon assumed the rôle of the great coquette, sent Beaumarchais his portrait, asked for his own in return, called him his "guardian angel," and presented him with a copy of

his works, published in 1774 under the title of *My Leisure Hours*, which must have been many and considerable for they occupied thirteen octavo volumes!

In July Beaumarchais returned once more to France. It was his eighth crossing between London and Paris. He took back with him precise details of d'Eon's demands and interesting ideas on American affairs to lay before the French Government. His object was to obtain definite instructions about d'Eon and the amount to be paid to him.

He had not lost sight of his own rehabilitation and the more indispensable he made himself the nearer it grew. The time would come when the King to be logical could not entrust an entirely confidential and important mission to a man deprived of his civil rights. He established relations with the King direct by submitting reports and questions in which Louis XVI was bound to interest himself and to reply on his own initiative. Beaumarchais won him over to his cause, and strong in the support of Maurepas and the King and Queen, the three foremost persons in the realm, could not fail soon to obtain justice. But what endless labour, what continuous strain to attain an end seemingly so natural and legitimate! He wanted justice done to him! . . . The rights of man were not to be proclaimed until fifteen years later! . . .

In the meantime the La Blache case was referred to the Parliament of Aix-en-Provence for further investigation.

On the 25th of August, Louis XVI instructed

Beaumarchais to acquire d'Eon's letters, and soon afterwards he left again for London accompanied by Gudin. It was his ninth journey. He must perforce have had great confidence in the future to spend his years in this way playing the diplomat without any of the rights and privileges appertaining to the office but exposed to all the animosities to which it was subject in addition to those called forth by his name and his prominence in the theatrical world.

CHAPTER X

"Money and intrigue—now you are in your element!"
The Marriage of Figaro.

THE moment for the final or at least the decisive phase in the negotiations with d'Eon was now at hand. The "Lady Chevalier" whom Beaumarchais carefully kept cooling his heels gradually exhibited the entire cargo of "her" papers. For ever drinking and smoking—Beaumarchais was a non-smoker—and swearing like a German postillion, to use Beaumarchais's own expression—d'Eon had not been in the dragoons for nothing—he made the disclosure of all his documents. Some were in an iron box, well padlocked, deposited with a friend, Admiral Lord Ferrers, as security for a debt; some were in his flat; some were even beneath the flooring of his bedroom; and all were classified, labelled, tied together and docketted.

D'Eon was particularly anxious to receive permission to return to France. That was the black spot in the negotiations and it gave rise to an exchange of letters between Vergennes and Beaumarchais embarrassing to both men.

But in reality the d'Eon affair had now become of secondary interest to Beaumarchais. He had set his hand to it and he would bring it to a conclusion, a

satisfactory conclusion of course. But the supreme business with him just then was America. He was conscious that the moment had come to act, and he made every preparation without loss of time. The d'Eon business was nothing more than an official pretext to enable him to develop to the King, and the King alone, the political considerations of interest and expediency alike for the secret intervention of France in support of the American colonists. Abruptly Beaumarchais said to Gudin who was on a visit to England but did not accompany him in his peregrinations and was unaware of their object:

"I am going back to France, my dear fellow, for a few days—it's the tenth time—to settle a matter quickly which would take a couple of months by correspondence. Are you coming back with me or not? It is just as you please."

Gudin, who was amusing himself in London and had a learned work on the stocks: *The Progress of the Arts and Human Understanding in the Reign of Louis XV*, allowed Beaumarchais to depart alone. This was on the 16th of September, 1775. On the 18th of September Beaumarchais was in Paris where he arrived unknown to anyone. On the 21st M. de Sartines laid before the King, on his behalf, a secret and concise memorial in which in addition to prognostications which subsequent events failed to verify—he predicted revolution in England thus seeing the mote in his neighbour's eye but failing to see the beam in his own —he showed rare diplomatic perspicacity:

"To the King

"Sire:

". . . I withdrew from England under pretext of going into the country. I have come in all haste from London to Paris to confer with Messieurs de Vergennes and Sartines on matters too important and too delicate to be entrusted to the care of any courier.

"Sire, England is in so great a crisis, so great a state of disorder, within and without, that she would be almost on the point of ruin were her neighbours and rivals themselves in a position to concern themselves seriously with her. . . . The Americans . . . have an effective force of thirty-eight thousand men beneath the walls of Boston; they have reduced the English army to the necessity of dying of hunger there or of seeking for winter quarters elsewhere. . . . About forty thousand men defend the rest of the country. . . .

"I say, sire, that such a nation must be invincible, above all since it has at its back as much country as it may need for retreating. . . . All sensible persons in England therefore are convinced that the English colonies are lost to the mother country, and that is also my opinion. . . . At the present time, to increase the trouble still more a secret subscription has been opened in London . . . to send gold to the Americans or to pay for the assistance which the Dutch are rendering them. . . .

"America is escaping the English in spite of their efforts. . . . The end of this crisis will bring about

COUNT DE VERGENNES

After the painting by Calla

war with France if the opposition party in England triumphs. . . . Our ministry which is badly informed appears stagnant and passive in all these events which affect us most vitally. It is indispensable to have a superior and vigilant man in London at the present time. . . ."

The "superior and vigilant man" of course was himself. On the 23rd of September the King invited him through M. de Vergennes to continue his investigations and to keep the Government informed of the course to be pursued. Beaumarchais was in the seventh heaven and returned to London at once. It is amusing to observe his interest in every discovery and branch of learning of that time whatever it might be in addition to the absorbing question of the American colonists. Thus he wrote to M. de Vergennes before embarking at Calais:

"Monsieur le Comte:

"I beg your excellency to allow the two sea charts of the Southern Hemisphere which I left behind in Paris and which are important to me for certain observations on the longitude of the lands discovered by Captain Cook to be addressed to you, as well as some observations by doctors of various countries on the beating of the pulse with regard to which I wish to have a discussion in London with Dr. M. . . .

"In the hope that your excellency will be pleased to

have them sent to me by M. de Guines' courier [M. de Guines was the French ambassador in London] so that they may reach me without expense, I am etc. . . ."

He took advantage of his journey to submit to Vergennes his solution of the difficulty in the way of d'Eon's return to France, and as soon as he reached London he resumed negotiations with the "lady Chevalier." He compelled him to sign a declaration, as part of the contract, acknowledging his *real* sex and agreeing in consequence to wear woman's clothes in future. D'Eon was willing to sign any document whatsoever since Beaumarchais handed him a contract by which an annuity of twelve thousand francs was to be paid to him. Moreover he promised him considerable further sums of money in due course. The Government had no intention, however, of paying the 300,477 francs claimed by d'Eon in his detailed statement of the year before. On the 5th of October the agreement was signed, and on the 7th Beaumarchais, as proud as Artabanus, wrote to Vergennes informing him of his success.

Then he dined once more with John Wilkes. Gudin, who was present and met d'Eon for the first time, swallowed with avidity and sympathy all the stuff and nonsense which "she" chose to serve up. Some days later Beaumarchais, Gudin and d'Eon went into the country to visit Admiral Lord Ferrers, from whom Beaumarchais was to receive the iron box containing the letters. They saw something of the country, of

farming and agriculture, of the manufactures of Birmingham. It was during this short holiday that while the horses were being changed the "little minister" was accosted by a traveller who hearing Gudin call Beaumarchais ran up and said:

"It is really a great honour for me to meet you so soon after my arrival in England. I have just come from Philadelphia where your Memorials are being read with absorbing interest. They are great works, they have made a profound sensation in my country, and you are held in the highest esteem for your splendid spirit of independence." Beaumarchais did not fail to question this American at length on the position of the colonists and the progress of hostilities.

At the end of November, adequately posted on American affairs, supported by his precious iron box as well as sheafs of letters more precious still, and accompanied by the faithful Gudin, Beaumarchais prepared to return to France, confident of having brought the d'Eon affair to a satisfactory conclusion. Though in possession of the necessary papers to enable "her" to enter France the ex-dragoon did not accompany "her guardian angel." "She" was unaware that he was paying a flying visit and would return before long, bringing back, moreover, later instructions of a definite character concerning "her."

On his arrival in Paris Beaumarchais was grieved to learn of the death of his worthy old sire who had passed away on the 23rd of October and to whom he owed so much in his start in life. Unable to allow

himself to mourn his loss for any length of time, he was obliged to continue his multifarious activities.

Acting with consummate ability he no sooner arrived than he submitted to the King a series of questions about d'Eon, which went on to deal without transition with his plan of campaign for America upon which he asked the King for precise instructions. But he was too pressing and the King held back. Three months later Beaumarchais carried by main force the victory over this amiable King who though quietly obstinate in his indecision often showed a mind of his own and acted by degrees. Beaumarchais—and France too—had many proofs of this characteristic as time went on. For the time being he was "pressing" the King with undue eagerness. Nevertheless the King was interested in his diplomatic agent's activities, was satisfied with them, and took it upon himself to reply to his questions. In his own handwriting he filled in the blank spaces which Beaumarchais left after each question:

"Essential points . . . to present for the King's decision before my departure for London this 13th of December, 1775, to be replied to in the margin: Does the King grant Mlle. d'Eon permission to wear the cross of St. Louis on her woman's clothes?

"Answer of the King: In the provinces only.

"Does His Majesty approve of the gratuity of two thousand crowns which I have given to this young lady to buy her woman's clothes?

"Answer of the King: Yes.

"Does His Majesty in this case leave her complete liberty with regard to her man's clothes?

"Answer of the King: She must sell them."

When the d'Eon affair was exhausted and Beaumarchais passed on to that of America the King avoided and evaded the issues and his answers became: "That may be," "It is useless" or else he ignored them altogether. It was indeed a curious age when the King of France could exchange question and answer with a man deprived of his civil rights under the criminal law, a man who more than the Minister of Foreign Affairs was entrusted with the conduct of the most serious event in foreign politics arising in the reign of Louis XVI.

On the 13th of December he left for London determined to devote his entire attention to the American imbroglio. True there was certain work to be cleared up in the d'Eon affair but it seemed to be settled. It seemed to be settled indeed but Beaumarchais was confronted with a man who was nearly a match for him who had been dipping into diplomacy for twenty years and knew the inmost recesses of it, and, unlike Morande of whom Beaumarchais declared "he was a poacher and I have made him an excellent gamekeeper," was now roving in quest of plunder. D'Eon showed no great hurry to return to Paris, and caused some clatter in London by gratuitously exploiting the doubt about his sex and encouraging bets on the question.

Beaumarchais had promised him further funds

but was not disposed to disburse them in the circumstances and d'Eon was in a fury. Sure of himself and the approval of Vergennes, Beaumarchais remained calm, answered him with dignity and strove to make "this madwoman" listen to reason. He treated him as if he were indeed an irritable old maid. The fact was that d'Eon assumed the tone of one with uncommon success and found an outlet for his ill-humour against his "guardian angel" by alleging as a pretext the vexatious rumours, current in Paris since Beaumarchais's mission and d'Eon's impending return were more or less known, according to which Beaumarchais was on the point of marrying this "old she-dragoon." He was the first to laugh at the whole story but he so completely believed in d'Eon being of the fair sex that he wrote to Vergennes:

"Everyone tells me that this mad old woman is mad about me. She thinks I have treated her with contempt, and women never forgive such an offence. . . ."

While still continuing to live in London which embarrassed both Beaumarchais and Vergennes, d'Eon was at last holding his peace. Beaumarchais kept the tail of his eye on "her" and could at the first sign of any trickery stop the annuity. In short for the eighteen months during which d'Eon remained in London comparative calm reigned. To obtain more money d'Eon pretended to have passed over only half the letters and to have others in his possession but that was all, and Beaumarchais did not allow himself

to be deceived. Moreover he had other things to do than to trouble about this obstreperous ex-dragoon who when all was said could do no harm.

To begin with he took advantage of his presence in London to put a stop to a fourth libel. He grew more and more convinced that some influential person was subsidising and directing this gang of blackmailers. He was content to inform Vergennes and give certain clues to the English police who took action. It was the more effective method of dealing with them as far as Vergennes and himself were concerned. Then he applied himself to his rôle as the intermediary between France and America and paved the way for secret negotiations. The most pressing thing was to obtain Louis XVI's definite consent to assist the insurgents across the water. Beaumarchais wrote letter after letter to Vergennes in his effort to demonstrate that France was incurring the risk of an early war with England and the loss of her colonies, if she adopted any other policy than that recommended by his zealous diplomat in London.

For some time Beaumarchais had been on friendly terms with Arthur Lee, a young American rebel whom he met at the house of John Wilkes. Studying law in England at the moment when the American colonies broke into revolt, Lee enlisted in the opposition party with Wilkes. He took advantage of the friendly advances of Beaumarchais, often too prone to talk about his projects, to make out that his services were indispensable to the American secret committee

who had appointed him representative of the Colonies in London. He wrote them letters full of promises, packed with splendid hopes regarding the generosity of France, generosity which he, Arthur Lee, had aroused by his ceaseless efforts with the French Ambassador in London and which had led M. de Vergennes to send him a secret agent and so forth. . . . These were all so many lies. While Beaumarchais was struggling with his Government, and could do no more than hope for the best from his persistence, Lee, aware of his work, had the hardihood to write to Boston:

"In consequence of my active endeavours with the French Ambassador in London, M. de Vergennes has sent me a secret agent, to inform me that the Court of France is ready to send arms and ammunition to Cape Français to the value of five millions whence they will be forwarded to the United Colonies."

When Beaumarchais told him that he was making his final appeal Lee held this language:

"You must obtain a reply from your Government this time. If it refuses us this assistance, it will have England to reckon with before long. The Ministers of your country are incredibly inactive. I want your reply so as to be able to send my own final reply. . . ."

He had already written in this strain:

"We offer France in return for such secret assistance as she may render us a secret treaty of commerce by which we undertake to reserve for France during a given period the right to export the products which have enriched England during the last hundred years,

LOUIS XVI, DERNIER ROI DES FRANÇAIS,

NÉ LE 23 AOUST 1754,

décapité le 2 Pluviose, l'an 1er de la République

Parvenu au trône à l'âge de 19 ans, Louis XVI montra un désir sincère d'assurer le bonheur des Français mais l'influence de ses perfides conseillers rendit ses moyens personnels presque nuls. Sous son règne s'accrurent de beaucoup les prodigalités de la cour. Un déficit énorme dans les finances obligea ce monarque à convoquer l'assemblée des notables, puis les États-Généraux, qu'il tenta inutilement de dissoudre dans la séance royale du 23 juin 1789. L'opinion publique le força d'éloigner les troupes rassemblées autour de Paris, et de rappeler les ministres patriotes qu'il avait renvoyés. Il parut alors seconder l'élan général vers la liberté, il applaudit à la réforme des abus, et présida la fédération du 14 juillet 1790. Le 21 juin suivant, il s'enfuit avec toute sa famille, après avoir consigné dans un mémoire, les motifs de son mécontentement. Il y déplorait, entr'autres choses, d'être prisonnier dans ses états, gêné dans les pratiques de sa religion, et d'avoir été forcé d'approuver la lettre par laquelle il déclarait aux puissances étrangères, son attachement libre à la nouvelle forme du gouvernement. Arrêté à Varennes, ramené à Paris, et conservé cependant sur le trône, il accepta solennellement la constitution de 1791. Accusé bientôt après de favoriser les ennemis du dehors et les princes émigrés, il fut assiégé dans son palais des Thuileries, le 10 août 1792, et enfermé au Temple. Une convention nationale fut convoquée elle abolit la royauté, et, le 21 décembre, Louis XVI comparut devant elle, pour être interrogé sur les crimes qu'on lui imputait. Le 26 du même mois, il fut entendu dans sa défense: le 16 janvier 1793, il fut jugé à mort, et il subit son supplice le 21, avec résignation et fermeté. Avec lui disparut une monarchie qui avait subsisté pendant 14 siècles, et qui, dans ses trois dynasties, avait compté 66 rois. On a publié, après sa mort, un Testament, qu'il écrivit à la tour du Temple, dans les derniers jours de décembre 1792, et dans lequel on remarque ce paragraphe: « Je recommande à mon fils, s'il avait le malheur de devenir roi, de songer qu'il doit tout entier au bonheur de ses concitoyens qu'il doit oublier toute haine et tout ressentiment, et nommément ce qui a rapport aux malheurs et chagrins que j'éprouve, qu'il ne peut faire le bonheur des hommes, qu'en régnant suivant les lois; mais, en même temps, qu'un roi ne peut les faire respecter et faire le bien qui est dans son cœur, qu'autant qu'il a l'autorité nécessaire; et qu'autrement, étant lié dans ses opérations, et n'inspirant point de respect, il est plus nuisible qu'utile. »

LOUIS XVI

From a copper print

and we would add a special clause to protect your Colonies to the fullest extent of our power. Any other solution on your part would bring about war with England without the support of the Americans if they prove victorious and in union with the mother country if they are defeated. I may add that the Spanish Government has better, or at least more quickly understood its interests than yours. It is ready to assist us materially and our two delegates in Madrid express themselves as well satisfied. . . ."

Beaumarchais returned to France in the early part of March, and handed to M. de Vergennes a final and sealed Memorial "For the King alone" entitled "Peace or War" dated the 29th February, 1776. He summarized in it the past and present and dealt with future possibilities after the settlement of the quarrel between England and the American Colonies:

"SIRE:

"The famous quarrel between England and America . . . imposes upon each power the necessity thoroughly to examine in what way the event can influence it and either serve or injure it.

"But the most interested country of all is indubitably France whose sugar islands since the last peace have been the constant object of the regrets and hopes of the English . . . In a first Memorial, sent three months since to Your Majesty by M. de Vergennes, I endeavoured to make it clear that Your Majesty could not be injured by taking wise precautions against

enemies who are never fastidious in regard to those which they take against us.

"At present . . . I am obliged to warn Your Majesty that the maintenance of our possessions in America and the peace which Your Majesty appears to desire so much depend solely upon this one proposition: *the Americans must be assisted.* That is the point which I will now demonstrate.

"Let us admit every possible hypothesis and let us discuss them.

"(1) If England triumphs over America she can only do so by an enormous expenditure of men and money. Now the only compensation the English have in mind is to take possession on their return of the French islands, and thus make themselves the exclusive traders in sugar which alone can make good the losses inflicted on their commerce.

"(2) If the Americans are victorious, the English in despair at seeing their standing diminished by three quarters, will only be the more eager to seek compensation in the easy capture of our American possessions.

"(3) If the English consider themselves driven to abandon the Colonies to themselves without striking a blow, the loss being the same for their standing, and their commerce being equally ruined, the result for us would be identical with the foregoing. . . .

"(4) If the opposition party becomes the Government and concludes a treaty of reunion with the Colonies, the Americans, incensed with France whose refusal of assistance will alone have caused them to submit

to the mother country, threaten us henceforward to unite all their forces with England in order to take possession of our islands . . .

"What then is to be done in this extremity so as to maintain peace and retain our islands?

"You will only maintain the peace you desire, Sire, by preventing at all costs peace from being made between England and America, and the only means of attaining this end is by giving assistance to the Americans who will put their forces on an equality with those of England but nothing beyond. . . .

"If it be said that we cannot assist the Americans without injuring England, and without drawing upon us the storm which I wish to avert, I reply in my turn that this danger will not be incurred if the plan I have so many times proposed be followed—namely, to assist secretly the Americans without compromising ourselves, imposing upon them the condition that they should commit no act which would tend to divulge the secret of this assistance which the first indiscretion on the part of Congress would cause it at once to lose. And if Your Majesty has not at hand a cleverer man to employ in the matter, I undertake and will answer for the execution of the treaty without anyone being compromised . . .

"Your Majesty can easily see that the entire success would depend on secrecy and dispatch here; but one infinitely important thing to both would be to send Lord Stormont back if possible to London as through the extent of his connections in France he is in a position

to gather information daily of all that is said and discussed in Your Majesty's Council. . . . The opportunity of the recall of M. de Guines is extremely favourable. . . . And the crisis once passed the most frivolous and magnificent of our noblemen might be sent without risk as ambassador to London; the work having succeeded or failed all else would then be of no importance. . . ."

He had unbounded confidence in himself, assuredly, to write in such terms to the King; but he had manœuvred with consummate skill. He ended his letter with the usual assurances of disinterested zeal. The truth was that up to that time he had advised his Government with great good sense, and however difficult of realisation his plan might be, it was in any case the most advantageous for France.

Vergennes believed that peace could still be maintained without resort to this stratagem. Louis XVI hung back. But the demands, the absence of ceremony, and the contempt of the rights of nations which England showed on the sea by subjecting French ships to a search, sinking those which attempted to escape, or taking by assault those which refused to allow the search, and by requiring the French Government to institute measures against merchants furnishing supplies to the insurgents, ended by overcoming Vergennes and Louis XVI's hesitations.

The King remained invisible to Beaumarchais, who however thought the moment opportune to retrieve his

position as it was in 1773, and he presented a petition to this effect to the Grand Council. If his petition were granted he could obtain from the King letters of "relief of time" enabling him to appeal against the sentence in the Goëzman case though the legal term allowed for an appeal—six months—had elapsed some year and a half before. He knew that the King would give him his due and the Council would then sit in judgment on his appeal and either confirm or annul the sentence passed by the Maupeou Parliament.

Beaumarchais returned to England in March. He resumed his labours with the bilious Arthur Lee. Of sallow complexion, green eye, yellow teeth, untidy hair, Lee was not without ability, but he was too fond of pushing himself forward, forcing his way at the expense of others, betraying his jealousy of those whose personal qualities might prevent him from taking the foremost place. Therefore he was seriously perturbed by the impending arrival of Silas Deane, a secret agent from America with whom obviously Beaumarchais would be in closer touch than with himself, thus relegating him to the second place.

Beaumarchais returned to Paris on the 24th of March, 1776, expecting presumably never to have to cross to England again. He had obtained in principle —at last!—an affirmative reply from Vergennes to his letter. Vergennes and Maurepas received him moreover with many complimentary expressions, and they strove to come to an understanding on the practical means of achieving their object.

"You understand, my dear fellow, that neither we nor His Majesty wish to compromise ourselves in any shape or form. To avoid war, to act in secret, yes, certainly, but if we assist the Americans we can only do so by indirect means; otherwise our intervention will be at once revealed to England, and that means war, which is the very thing we wish to avoid. What we can do is to subsidise secretly a great commercial enterprise and endeavour to induce the Court of Spain, with whom whatever Arthur Lee may say to the contrary we are still in negotiation, to add its subsidy to ours. It is essential that neither the English nor the Americans should suspect anything whatever apart from a strictly commercial affair transacted with friends and supporters to whom in exchange for our shipments and advances they will send as return freights the products of their soil, tobacco and cotton in particular which we have hitherto purchased from the English, for supplies sent gratuitously would betray our participation.

"The affair carried out in this way would in no sense compromise us and would ensure, if properly conducted on both sides, satisfaction to the Americans and our traders. But to work with advantage, the supplies must be unified, the capital controlled by one and the same house, and you are the only man we can place at the head of this house. Your abilities, your practical knowledge, your relations with Congress and its representatives, your extreme skill in the art of negotiation as a pupil of Duverney, your energy—all these things

are necessary and will suffice for the entire and particular direction of all commerce, exports as well as imports, either of munitions of war—our arsenals will supply you with them at cost price and you will replace or pay for them—or of the usual products of France required by the United Colonies and of the Colonies required by France. You will have the direction of all business, the control of prices, the conclusion of all treaties, the making of all engagements, the recovery of all debts.

"The King offers you a million francs to start with. We will try to get the same amount from Spain. That will represent a very respectable capital to launch the business with, after which things should go ahead of themselves.

"You must, of course, render us an account of your transactions, of the use made of the capital and, if there is occasion and profits are realised and the King desires it, a return of the whole or part of the advance which in short we agree to make to Beaumarchais & Co.

"You will do well, however, not to use your own name in the undertaking. If it were known that you were interested in it, no one would believe you were controlling it, which, in the eyes of the English, would practically imply our participation. So much then for our proposal.

"As far as the Americans are concerned, it all comes to the same thing. As for yourself, it is an immense enterprise, but you have the necessary capacity to carry it through. You will have in your possession very

shortly considerable funds from the co-operation of your friends and the big traders, and you will be able to establish a handsome fortune for yourself. Does the whole thing suit you?"

Beaumarchais accepted the task with enthusiasm, enraptured at the thought of uniting patriotism, intrigue, charity and money—two million francs or more—in one huge combination of which he would be the all powerful ruler.

CHAPTER XI

"My friends the free men of America."

BEAUMARCHAIS.

AS a result of the new development Vergennes on the 5th of June, 1776, gave Beaumarchais his orders regarding the payment of the capital and the dispatch of munitions to America. On the 10th of June he received from the French Treasury the famous million francs and on the 16th he set out for Bordeaux.

A month later the million francs from Spain was added to his store, and in the meantime he collected other considerable sums of money. Many wealthy noblemen were eager to take a hand in the speculation. Beaumarchais established his offices in a large building called the Hotel de Hollande in La Vieille Rue du Temple. In short his business was started on a considerable scale. To begin with he bought three vessels —*Le Perou*, *La Belle Hélène* and an ex-troopship, *L'Hippopotame*, which the Government sold to him.

He disguised his firm under the name of Rodrigue Hortalès & Co., rechristened the troopship *Le Fier Rodrigue*, refitted her with fifty-two guns and appointed a competent captain. The vessel was intended to con-

voy the argosies belonging to the house of Rodrigue Hortalès & Co. across the water. He returned to Paris on the 3rd of July.

The United Colonies of America, now confident of receiving assistance—it mattered little whence it came or how it would be paid for—launched the Declaration of Independence to the world on the 4th of July, 1776. Not long before, America sent Silas Deane to France as its accredited representative pending the arrival of Franklin.

Silas Deane was received and presented to M. de Vergennes by Dr. Barbeu Dubourg whose one hobby was botany. The doctor was a great traveller and he had been on terms of friendship with Franklin in England. Accordingly from the outset of the American trouble he offered his services to the Minister with a view to assisting the Americans.

It was to him therefore that Franklin sent Silas Deane, and the doctor might reasonably hope to be chosen with the American representative to play the principal part in the commercial and other operations. But when the doctor introduced Silas Deane Vergennes explained that he had placed Beaumarchais at the head of affairs and it would be for Silas Deane to negotiate with him.

The old botanist was extremely vexed at being supplanted. After a conference with Beaumarchais he wrote Vergennes a letter not clever enough to be malicious in which he explained that he took Beaumarchais for "one of the most suitable men in the world

SILAS DEAN

From the drawing from life by Dusimetière

for political negotiations but perhaps at the same time one of the least fitted to conduct mercantile negotiations [the botanist himself was an expert of course!]. He likes display. It is asserted that he keeps young ladies; in short he passes for a spendthrift." At the same time he advised Silas Deane not to accept Vergennes's point of view or to enter into relations with Beaumarchais, who on reading the letter, which greatly amused Vergennes and himself, answered the worthy doctor and gave a few explanations in addition:

"Well, how does it affect our business if I am a man well known in society, love display and keep young ladies? The ladies whom I have kept for twenty years, monsieur, are your very humble servants. They were five in number, four sisters and a niece. During the last three years two of these kept girls have died to my great sorrow. I now only keep three, two sisters and my niece. . . . But what would you have thought if knowing me better you had been aware that I carried the scandal so far as to keep men too, two nephews, and even the too unhappy father who brought such a scandalous person as myself into the world? . . ."

Poor Doctor! He was both humiliated and disappointed. . . . Still he would himself find some capital. But his efforts came to nothing. So with all the courage he possessed he fitted out a little ship on his own account, loaded her with every kind of good thing for America and confided her fate to the waters. The little ship never reached her destination for an English vessel fell in with her and gobbled her up. The

doctor took his revenge by keeping Franklin out of the way of Beaumarchais when he arrived in December, 1776. . . . He died two years later.

On the other hand the jealous Arthur Lee arrived in France at the same time and did his utmost to create difficulties. He tried first to bring about discord between Silas Deane and Beaumarchais, but Beaumarchais had complete confidence in Silas Deane, a sturdy, fair-haired fellow with an honest eye. They soon came to an understanding as to the nature of the exports and imports to be dealt with. During the next six months Beaumarchais lent various sums of money to this "good republican" whom his own Government entirely omitted to supply with funds. Then Arthur Lee, spurred on by his ignominious jealousy, wrote to Congress complaining that Deane and Beaumarchais were trading together, and transforming what the ministry meant to be a gratuitous gift into a commercial transaction.

The affair did not move of itself and Beaumarchais had so many irons in the fire that he might well have lost his head. To begin with there was his lawsuit against La Blache under investigation again in Aix. Judgment indeed was some way off but he had to keep the case in mind. Next there was his petition before the Grand Council. His rehabilitation had become more than ever necessary.

It was at this stage that Beaumarchais was compelled to go to Bordeaux on his business affairs, and it so happened that the Grand Council was about to give

its decision. He was filled with anxiety and thought of postponing his departure. Maurepas to whom he confided his apprehensions reassured him:

"Go all the same, my dear fellow, the Grand Council can give its decision without you."

Accordingly he went off to Bordeaux. Gudin accompanied him. On his arrival two days later he found several letters from Paris awaiting him at his hotel. He read them imperturbably. Gudin watched him closely.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, thanks, all's well."

Gudin slept the sleep of the just. Beaumarchais woke him up at four o'clock.

"Why, what's the matter? Are you ill?" he asked, yawning.

"No, but we leave for Paris in half an hour."

"Really? What's happened?"

"The Grand Council has rejected my petition."

"You don't mean it," exclaimed Gudin jumping out of bed. "And you said nothing to me last night!"

"I wanted you to sleep in peace," returned Beaumarchais in his most genial tone.

They set out for Paris at a gallop under the summer sun and Beaumarchais's memories could not help reaching back to another scamper from Amsterdam to Vienna under an August sun two years before and he laughed on the wrong side of his face. In sixteen hours —record time—he was at Fontainebleau where the Court was spending the summer. Maurepas gave a

start on seeing him come into his office and hurried towards him.

"My poor boy, I am as distressed about it as you are."

"Whilst I am working for the affairs of the King you ruin mine. It's not business you know. My petition *must* be granted."

"It is a blunder on Miromesnil's part [the Minister of Justice]. He has managed the matter very badly. Go and see him, he is in his office, and return here together. We will manage it."

No sooner said than done. With a doleful air Miromesnil appeared and it was determined to reopen the question in another form. The Minister of Justice was given full instructions and in less than a week Beaumarchais's petition was granted by the Grand Council.

Not long after, the Prince de Conti, a staunch friend of twelve years standing, lay dying. Notorious for his innate scepticism he refused to see a priest and take the sacrament. It was to Beaumarchais that the Prince's family appealed to persuade the Prince to die in the faith of the Church. And the good-hearted Beaumarchais, who though not a practising Christian was a believer at heart, Beaumarchais who was confirmed and married in church though he was not destined to receive extreme unction when his time came, prevailed on his old friend to confess to the Archbishop of Paris and receive the last sacrament. Thus the Prince de Conti died as a Christian on the

22nd of August, 1776, and Beaumarchais lost a devoted and powerful supporter and friend.

On the 12th of August he received from Louis XVI a letter of "relief of time" couched in flattering terms:

"... Whereas our friend Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais has left the Kingdom by our order and in our service, it is our will that he be replaced and re-established in such and a like state as if the said lapse of time had not passed by, and that he may notwithstanding the said lapse of time appeal against the said judgment, either by a civil petition, or by such other legal means as he may think fit."

For such is our royal pleasure. To be sure royal rule has its good points. Beaumarchais was now all eagerness. The Parliamentary vacation was drawing near and it seemed as though the Grand Council's decision could not be given until the new session in November. Therefore Beaumarchais, whom Maurepas continued to make much of and who strove to keep Maurepas amused by his sallies, calmly laid before the old Minister the drafts of several letters and said:

"Have these recopied, sign them and send them off to the Chief President, the Advocate General and a few others." And Beaumarchais expressed his thanks to Maurepas in anticipation of his good offices. . . .

At the same time he found it necessary to write at length to d'Eon, who was trying to blackmail him. He started his letter afresh three times in his desire to be courteous, "considering it, on reflection, undesirable to send either of the first two and forgetting as far

as possible all that is unjust and outrageous in your conduct towards me because I am writing to a woman and not to a man. . . ."

On the 6th of September before the adjournment, the entire Parliament, Grand Chamber and Tournelle, considered Beaumarchais's petition. They were acting by royal favour for the case ought legally to have been submitted for examination to the same tribunal which had passed the sentence; that is to say, the Grand Council alone to which, after the dissolution of the Maupeou Parliament, most of the judges who tried Beaumarchais in 1774 belonged.

The Court was thronged. Confident of the result this time, Beaumarchais could not resist at least notifying if not inviting his friends and they all made a point of being present at the wonderful sitting. He entrusted his defence to an advocate called Target, popular and famous at that time for his refusal to appear or plead before the Maupeou Parliament. Target delivered an eloquent speech in which after summarising the facts of the case, he showed the iniquity of the sentence, reminded the Court that neither Louis XV nor Louis XVI has hesitated to entrust the "blamed" defendant with confidential missions, recalled also the deep and intimate friendship that existed between the late Prince de Conti and Beaumarchais, condemned in no uncertain language Nicolai and his like, and claimed a verdict restoring Beaumarchais to his civil rights.

The Advocate General Séguier wound up the case by supporting semi-officially Target's plea whereupon

the Court pronounced judgment annulling the sentence passed by the Maupeou Parliament. Standing beside his counsel Beaumarchais gave way to emotion but he proudly raised his head. The crowd received the judgment with enthusiasm and he was borne in triumph from the Court to his carriage. He scribbled a note to M. de Vergennes and dispatched it at once begging him to inform Sartines and Maurepas.

"Paris 6.9.76.

"Monsieur le Comte:

"I have just been judged and the blame removed amid a universal concourse of applause. Never has an unfortunate citizen received greater honour. I hasten to inform you of the result, and pray you to be kind enough to lay my warmest gratitude at the feet of the King. Over four hundred persons are around me and I am trembling with such joy that my hand can scarcely write all the respectful sentiments with which I am etc. . ."

But it was impossible for him to rest on his laurels and live in peace. Though he declared that such was his dream he was still a long way from realising it. Would he ever realise it? Would he one day escape from the vortex in which he was plunged, would he ever break the fetters of the many business affairs in which he was bound—this "universal man" as he was called by Cailhava whom he met at Fontainebleau when the Court was present at his play *L'Egoiste*. For Beau-

marchais was compelled to be in any number of places at once; to keep in touch with all and sundry—Maurepas, Sartines, the Spanish Ambassador, his associates in Nantes, Bordeaux, Havre, Lorient, the American representatives of Congress in Paris, his agents. In England there was Théveneau de Morande, entirely devoted to him; in America, Morande's brother, Théveneau de Francy, whom he appointed treasurer and general representative of Rodrigue Hortalès & Co. He had, too, to correspond with ships' officers; with those whom he himself enrolled and sent to America before Lafayette went there. He was the chief of all these persons. He had to humour the susceptibilities of one, make good the blunders or indiscretions of another, compel some to collect his debts, give all precise instructions, receive the complaints of some and himself complain of others. Not a week passed that he did not write a long letter to Vergennes or receive instructions from him. He wrote for trading purposes a work on the coinage of the United States, a Memorial on Madagascar, another on India dealing with trade and the Indian Ocean. It was the life of a galley slave led with his accustomed energy and good humour.

He appointed Gudin's brother as cashier of his firm in La Vieille Rue du Temple. He sent his nephew, Lépine's son, as an officer to America, and also Decoudray, a brother of the advocate, an artilleryman and somewhat headstrong, the Marquis de La Rouerie, a great friend of George Washington, General Pulaski,

a Pole, Count de Conway, an Irishman, and Baron Steuben, a German, at one time aide to Frederick the Great. All these activities had to be carried out in secret, for Lord Stormont was on the war path uttering denunciations and crying treachery. English ships were cruising off the French coast, and it was important for Beaumarchais's vessels, to which he had added the new units *Le Ferragus*, *L'Amphitrite*, *Le Flamand*, *Le Mercure*, *La Thérèse*, *La Marie Catharine*, to be able to put out to sea without encountering the fate of Barbeu Dubourg's little ship. . . . He had to outwit the English. Was he not risking the loss of millions of francs if the British navy captured his 25,000 muskets the complete equipment for 25,000 men, cannon balls, guns, English hardware, cloth, gauzes, ribbons, silk stuffs, nails, linen cloth, cordage, paper, books, brushes, intended for America?

He was immersed in a prodigious undertaking and the outlay was prodigious in proportion. The first shipment to America ran him into over three million francs. In the course of a year he sent shipments to the value of six million francs, and he received from Congress neither money nor return cargoes, neither cotton nor indigo nor rice nor tobacco nor even a single letter. He was in danger of bankruptcy, of a terrible financial crash, in which he alone would suffer.

During the year 1777 he contrived to obtain from Vergennes an advance on three separate occasions, amounting in all to fifteen hundred thousand francs, but these were sums of money which he would un-

doubtedly be required to repay sooner or later. It was much the same with military stores from the arsenals which he had to pay for in cash at the rate of twenty-five francs for each musket, and so much the pound by the weight for mortar pieces. When he asked for credit he was called upon to deposit security, and he had to replace gunpowder within three months. In the meantime he received no word from Congress. Was it a case of dishonesty, of taking advantage of his well-known generosity? By no means. It was the result of a misunderstanding, a painful misunderstanding as far as Beaumarchais was concerned, brought about by Arthur Lee who had no scruple in writing to Congress after telling Franklin the same thing: "M. de Vergennes, the Minister, and his secretary have repeatedly assured me that no return was expected for the cargoes sent out by Beaumarchais. This gentleman is not a trader but a political agent of the Court of France."

Some days later he reiterated his statement with less assurance: "The Ministry has often given us to understand that we had nothing to pay for the cargoes supplied by Beaumarchais." Meanwhile Beaumarchais's young treasurer was struggling with the Secret Committee of Congress. Silas Deane, returning to America not long after Franklin's arrival, strove to unmask the artifices of Arthur Lee. At last, in December, 1777, Beaumarchais received a small cargo of rice and indigo. It was of the value of 150,000 francs and he had already sent out cargoes worth more than six millions. Nor

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

From an oil painting in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

were his anxieties confined to monetary matters. At Court he was regarded as overbold and sometimes a counter-order was sent to the captains of his ships laden with muskets and cannon balls, guns and officers, or else the Court refused to supply him with the necessary sailors. He was constrained to implore the aid of Vergennes since delay might have serious consequences. He did not hesitate to write to him: "What a country! The slightest private interest is enough to obstruct the most important public designs," and when Vergennes raised too many difficulties he appealed to the famous Sartines, now Minister of the Navy—Sartines knew nothing about the Navy—and everything came out all right in the end. Still he might well write to Francy in America:

"I am struggling against obstacles of every kind but I am struggling with all my might and I hope to conquer with patience, courage and money. The enormous losses which all these things cause me do not appear to affect anyone. . . ."

He never seemed to lose hope:

"As for you, my dear friend, I imagine you have arrived. I imagine you have obtained from Congress some reasonable advance on account, and such as the position of affairs in America has permitted them to make you. I imagine that according to my instructions you have obtained and will obtain tobacco every day. I imagine that my vessels will find their return cargoes ready to be put on shipboard as soon as they arrive where you are. I hope, too, that if events should

keep them here longer than I imagine, you will at least send me by *Le Flamand* a cargo which will help me out of the horrible predicament I am in. . . ."

Then again:

"I am looked upon as a ruined man and everyone is pressing me for his money. . . ."

And yet he lent money to whomsoever asked for it. In the same letter he wrote:

"I have received no other money for the Comte de Pulaski except that which he remitted to me himself. . . . I have just paid one hundred louis on his account. . . . I approve of what you have done for M. de Lafayette, excellent young man that he is. I am doing myself a service when I oblige men of his character. . . ."

Seeing Franklin struggling with American usurers, Francy unhesitatingly lent him money belonging to Beaumarchais.

"Remember me kindly and offer my good wishes to Baron de Steuben. I greatly congratulate myself from what he tells me on having given so fine an officer to my friends the free men of America. I am in no way uneasy about the money I lent him to enable him to start. I have never made use of money in more agreeable fashion for I have put a man of honour in his true place . . . Tell him that his fame is the interest on my money and that I do not doubt on these terms he will pay me with usury. . . ."

Meantime his accounts showed a deficit of three

million francs and the authorities hesitated to come to his assistance. He wrote to Vergennes:

"But if everything is not going well neither is everything going ill. . . . I have received a letter . . . informing me that *L'Amphitrite* has arrived safely at Charleston, Southern Carolina. I hasten to acquaint you with this news asking you to rejoice in it for love of me if the cause of America has become so indifferent to France that you have no wish to rejoice in it for love of her."

He continued to live a most exhausting life. Indefatigable, he passed a great part of 1777 in scouring the country. With the help of Gudin he covered France on business affairs from Havre, where in the interval between two inspections of his ships he rehearsed the actors about to play *The Barber of Seville*, to Rochefort Arsenal; from La Rochelle to Bordeaux where also *The Barber of Seville* was being performed and he was recognised and loudly acclaimed; from Cette to Marseilles where he saw the departure of *L'Heureux*, one of his vessels which Lord Stormont, still squalling, had kept in the roadstead for six months. He stopped at Aix to give a passing glance at his case against La Blache, not yet due to come before the Court. At Lyons he collected together some capital, completed the transaction of business, retraced his steps eastward and returned to Paris. With his amazing faculty for work, he sprung upon Ministers four or five Memorials on the American question and on the Caisse d'Escompte, a new Discount Bank about

which Ministers consulted him but which no one ventured to call a Bank nearly sixty years after John Law's[1] exploits in banking. For the La Blache case he circulated a *Sequel to the Defence in Beaumarchais's Lawsuit* and—extraordinary man—embodied in it a discourse which he intended to pronounce before the Parliament in 1776 as a plea for his rehabilitation but was prevailed upon to renounce. In the circumstances the brochure was of course suppressed. Not long afterwards he entered upon a dispute with the actors over the question of the fees due to him for the performances of *The Barber of Seville*.

[1] John Law (1671–1729), a Scotsman who became Comptroller of French Finance under the regency of the Duke of Orleans and whose name is associated with the tragic failure of the Mississippi Scheme.

CHAPTER XII

"Ah, what strange creatures to deal with these actors are!"
MOLIÈRE.

FROM time immemorial financial arrangements between actors and authors were indefinite and unsatisfactory and accounts rendered in the most cursory manner. Authors' fees were paid at no specific period, and no regulation governed the prerogatives of actor or author. For some considerable time authors had striven in vain to place this financial question on a proper footing but self-interested parties stood adamant. In 1776, a lawsuit arose between an author and the actors, and the Duc de Richelieu, the superior authority over the stage, requested Beaumarchais to study the whole subject, examine the books of accounts of the Théatre Français, the custom in the past, and discover if possible some general solution which might take the force of law.

Beaumarchais had always been on good terms with the actors because as the author of *Eugénie*, *The Two Friends* and *The Barber of Seville*, and a comparatively rich man, he had never made any demand upon them. Nevertheless they absolutely declined to confide their

books of account to him even on the duke's order. Beaumarchais did not persist but he wrote to the duke promising to "take the first opportunity my work permits to deal with the actors so as to examine seriously who is in the right or wrong. . . ."

As a matter of fact he at once asked them to submit an exact account of the amount owing to him for the thirty-two performances of *The Barber of Seville*. Their only reply was to withdraw the piece, and no mention was made of his rights. This was not to his liking. He went to a meeting of the actors and was asked what he intended to do with the play in the future.

"Give it to us as is the custom," they said.

"The custom, really, and why?" he asked.

"If you will not give it to us——"

"I did not say that."

"Tell us how many times you wish it to be played for your benefit so that it may belong to us afterwards."

"But why should it belong to you?"

"It is the custom. Do you wish it to be played eight, ten, twelve times? Come, tell us."

"Well, since you permit it I should like it to be played a thousand and one times for my benefit."

"You are very modest."

"As modest, gentlemen, as you are just."

Some three months later the players sent him through Des Essarts, once a lawyer and now an actor, an abstract of the account due to him "according to the custom observed by the Comédie Française with

authors," and 4500 francs as representing author's fees for thirty-two successful performances. The account was not certified. Beaumarchais wanted an exact and properly signed account. He knew, and this was the crux of the difference between them—other authors were at law with the actors—that in principle authors were paid one-twelfth of the receipts so long as these receipts did not fall below a certain minimum. But if the takings at any one performance fell below this figure the play became the property of the actors. Moreover only "door money," in other words the actual sum taken at the doors, was entered on the receipts. Booked seats and in particular boxes which were rented by the year were not reckoned in the receipts.

Beaumarchais took the matter up and under the ægis of the Duc de Duras, the second superior authority over the stage and the man most interested in actors—he was their friend and still more the friend of actresses—endeavoured to reach an amicable solution of the difficulty. He addressed an appeal to the most eminent dramatic authors of the day and brought them together at his house to lunch. By these means some sort of understanding among themselves was reached—an important step in the right direction.

He placed before them the entire problem, explained the nature of the differences which had arisen and suggested the formation of a committee of dramatic authors. His proposal was adopted and the committee was called the Theatrical Legislative Bureau. It

comprised four members. The first members were MM. Saurin and Marmontel, members of the Academy, and Sedaine and Beaumarchais, and they undertook to render an account to the other members of their proceedings when a satisfactory agreement with the actors was in prospect. Cailhava, Gudin, Laplace, Chamfort, La Haspe were present among others whose names are now forgotten. . . .

Even yet Beaumarchais's activities were not at an end. Lo and behold one fine morning in August, 1777, d'Eon arrived in Versailles on the quiet and to crown it all in the uniform of a dragoon! Vergennes was in a panic. He sent for d'Eon and read *her* a regular lecture: "Come, mademoiselle, this won't do . . ."

After exciting curiosity and interest, which was his main object, d'Eon prudently consented to resume "the garments of her sex." Two dresses were ordered from the Queen's modiste. Of grotesque appearance in such garb, d'Eon was none the less the topic of general conversation. Wagers on his sex persisted in increasing amounts and persons supposed to know declared that "everything combined to confirm the view that d'Eon was in fact a woman." This belief was held in France until 1810 when d'Eon, who returned to England in 1783, died. The evidence then adduced by the doctor and other persons of good faith was conclusive.

In 1777 d'Eon was on the worst possible terms with Beaumarchais who had seen through his game the year before. *She* wrote from London to Vergennes that

he "had the insolence of a watchmaker's apprentice who had by chance discovered perpetual motion." On his return to France d'Eon circulated a report that Beaumarchais had retained for his own use a part of the money destined for himself. It was an utter slander, but it was the method set in fashion by La Blache and employed by all persons having any grievance against him, and it was the sort of thing to which he was exposed for the rest of his life. Vergennes wrote him a letter which effectually exonerated him from any such suspicion.

Beaumarchais lived a happy home life—when he was at home. On the 5th of January this breaker of hearts had a daughter by Mlle. de Villermawlaz. The child was called Eugénie. From this time Mlle. de Villermawlaz lived permanently in his house as his mistress, and it was understood that one of these days their union would be regularised. To complete the eventful year his carriage was overturned in the Rue des Petits Champs on the 4th of December as he was coming back from Passy where he had been to see Franklin. Fortunately the damage was slight. It was at this moment that the first return cargo was received from America. . . . And the new year opened. . . .

The new year opened with a final meeting of authors at Beaumarchais's house. Their task was concluded, the work of the committee was ratified, and preparations were made to submit it to Parliament for approval and legal enactment. But the weak side of

this first association of dramatic authors was its spirit of intrigue while some of them stirred up strife with Beaumarchais so that in the end the scheme was abandoned and each one went his own way as before.

D'Eon exerted himself to continue his slanders and Beaumarchais who had not engaged in combat for eighteen months took up his pen and defended himself in the newspapers. He wrote to Vergennes: "It has been proved that no one has ever been able to do a little good to this woman without a great deal of evil resulting to those who have interested themselves in her," and in another letter he referred to her as a "wretched marionette."

Voltaire came to Paris at this time. He was pleased to make the acquaintance of the author of the Memorials at the first performance of *Irène*. And then Beaumarchais hastened to Aix. He found time—it might well be asked when and how—to draw up a long Memorial on the La Blache case. The difficulty was to find advocates of the Parliament of Aix willing to countersign it. While he was elaborating a settlement of the differences between actor and author, and sending all sorts of nice things to "the free men of America," La Blache, following his usual custom, was calling on every house in the good town of Aix in his endeavour to influence public opinion in his own favour and to secure the signature of every advocate of the Parliament in support of his forensic lucubrations which he disseminated to the four winds. All the same two or three advocates held themselves free to sign

VOLTAIRE

After the drawing by Ferney

Beaumarchais's pleadings. It was a blow to La Blache for it would have been an excellent trick on his part if he could have deprived his adversary of every kind of support.

In the end the entire town supported La Blache except a few advocates. It was a town strongly attached to the aristocracy and the whole body of magistrates were nobles. Beaumarchais might well definitely lose his case in such an atmosphere. He reached Aix at the eleventh hour, leaving Paris without making any reply to a flashy work just published from the witty "Lady Chevalier": "A very humble reply to the high and mighty Seigneur, Monseigneur Pierre Augustin de Caron or Carillon, otherwise Beaumarchais, Baron de Ronac of Franconia, adjudicator-general of the Forests of Pecquigny, Tonnere and other places, first lieutenant of the chase of the warren of For l'Evèque and Palais du Roi, necessary lord of the Forests of stock jobbery, discounting, exchange and barter and other commonalties," by Charlotte Geneviève Louisa d'Eon. It was a shrewish piece of writing and meant nothing.

In May, 1777, Beaumarchais accompanied by the inseparable Gudin left Paris for Marseilles to dispatch two vessels to the United States. Before his departure he finished—incredible as it may seem amid his extraordinarily full life—*The Marriage of Figaro*. How had he managed to find the spare time? That was the riddle! But the piece was ready and even the parts were allotted. To his "dear Doligny" whom he had

not lost sight of he assigned the rôle of the Comtesse Almaviva. But the actors must needs be more favourably disposed towards him before the piece could be played. Therefore he waited.

Moreover he had committed to paper—it is true he allowed it to lie fallow—the rough outline of an opera, not a comic opera like the first version of *The Barber of Seville* but an opera with a dramatic-cum-philosophic basis which he called *Tarare*. Of this opera, placed on the stocks in 1775 when he composed his preface to *The Barber of Seville*, the scenario and a number of speeches were interwoven in the draft of the preface. It was after he had established relations, in 1774, with Gluck whose operas and musical theories were exciting the social and artistic world of Paris that he planned the composition of *Tarare* in collaboration with the great musician. Beaumarchais was a versifier only in the last resort and never a poet. He wrote his opera in prose to begin with. He intended to turn it into verse when the opportunity offered.

. . . . . .

The day drew near for the last act in the tragi-comedy which had lasted eight years—the dispute over Duverney's will or the La Blache lawsuit. And Figaro, jack-of-all-trades, made his final arrangements so that all might end well. Thus passed the month of June.

On the very morning when England, seeking war since France on the 13th of March, 1778, recognised the Independence of America, fired the first shot at a

French frigate off Morlaix, Beaumarchais issued in Aix his: Open Reply by P. A. Caron de Beaumarchais to the highly abusive Consultation published in Aix by the sieur Falcoz de la Blache. The first part dealt with the "pleadings of the sieur de Beaumarchais," the second was called "the artifices of the Comte de la Blache." It was in reality a rehash of the old story told for the edification of the good people of Aix. By midday the town, helped by the heat of the sun, was in a state of excitement. By two o'clock Beaumarchais had gained a number of partisans and by evening public opinion had completely turned round to his side. And there you are!

He forebore to stir from the house of M. Mathieu, his attorney, with whom he and Gudin were staying. La Blache, supported by his old satellite Chatillon, accompanied as in Paris by an army of advocates, attorneys, solicitors, attendants, bailiff's men more or less suspect and venal, showed himself in vain everywhere. Public opinion had almost at once turned in favour of his adversary. His last resource was to present a petition praying to have Beaumarchais's Memorial torn up and burnt. Beaumarchais indeed was more violent and less witty than in his Memorials of 1774. He told the story of the tricks played by the Comte and Caillard, and did not spare either of them though Caillard had died three years before in somewhat unhappy circumstances. He might well have thrown a veil of anonymity over the poor dead advocate even in his narration of the facts.

He issued a second Memorial and the Parliament of Aix sat from morning till evening for a month examining with a minute care and an impartiality worthy of all praise the varied aspects and ramifications of the case which it was sought to make obscure but which in reality was clear enough.

At the finish Beaumarchais asked to be allowed to lay before the judges his proofs and requested a similar privilege for his adversary. The Parliament assented and during five hours with a day's interval between, Beaumarchais and La Blache explained and pleaded their respective cases before the assembled judges. On the 21st of July, the day when judgment was to be pronounced, Beaumarchais did not leave M. Mathieu's house.

The public besieged the door of the Law Courts or gathered together in excited groups in the shade of the long avenue which led to them. La Blache in his drawing room which overlooked the avenue could see and hear under cover of the curtains the crowd of onlookers vehemently discussing the case. He had now lost all hope. Gudin stood speechifying volubly at the very door of the Court. Marin, living a retired life in La Ciotal, his dear native country, had journeyed to Aix to seek diversion and follow his victorious enemy's case, and his rotund person could be seen by all and sundry.

At night time when the early stars came out it was given forth that Beaumarchais had won. Yells of delight and acclamations went up and Gudin ran back

like a whirlwind followed by hundreds of supporters to Beaumarchais's residence. As he heard the tumult, his weary heart throbbed loudly. He rose from his chair. By this time Gudin was in the room and a multitude of enthusiastic Southerners pressed round him. Overcome with emotion Beaumarchais fainted away. "Poor fellow, quick, smelling salts, water, air, vinegar!" There was a general movement to assist him. He came to himself, smiled, took his hat and stick and walked through the town to offer his thanks to the Chief President. On the way Gudin gave him details of the judgment. His Memorials and those of La Blache were to be torn up by an officer of the Court and Beaumarchais was condemned to pay a thousand crowns to the poor of the town for libel. But La Blache's Memorials were stigmatised as slanderous. La Blache was condemned to pay twelve thousand francs damages and costs, and to execute in its entirety the deed signed by Duverney. Beaumarchais had won his case by a unanimous vote.

After being gravely lectured by the Chief President for the truculence of his Memorials Beaumarchais returned to his attorney's house. He gave a great supper party, and all the violinists, flautists, castanet and tambourine players of the place serenaded him under his window until midnight. His supporters gathered together a heap of faggots, made a bonfire, and danced round it in the friendly dim light of the moon.

During the following days Beaumarchais was in great request socially. For the fine of one thousand

crowns which he was ordered to pay to the poor of the town he substituted two thousand crowns as much out of bravado as generosity and by way of congratulating the town, he said, "on having such good and virtuous magistrates."

On the 31st of July, 1778, La Blache paid him 70,625 francs, namely, 15,000 francs due under the deed, 5,625 francs for interest, 12,000 francs for damages, 8,000 francs for appeal costs in 1773, and 30,000 francs for interest on the amount of 75,000 francs which Duverney had undertaken, on releasing him from the partnership in the Forest of Touraine, to lend him for eight years free of interest. On the plea of clearing up points in newspaper reports of the case, Beaumarchais in August wrote to certain Paris sheets giving them full details of this epilogue to his lawsuit. He wanted above all to attract a little more attention to himself in Paris which had almost forgotten him since his departure.

But Beaumarchais was never able to rest from his labours long. At the end of August he left Aix for Paris and resumed control of his trading firm which seemed to be flourishing. France was now at war. Nevertheless he spent twelve days secretly in London gathering information on the course of events. His *Fier Rodrigue* had returned from America safe and sound on the 1st of October. *Le Ferragus*, laden with a cargo and fully armed, had sailed from Rochefort in September. All was well except that Beaumarchais was pledging his personal fortune and had overstepped

every possible limit, expecting all the time return cargoes from Congress which did not materialise. Moreover he was running the risk of a terrible crash assuming that the United States sent him neither money nor cargoes, and his vessels were attacked and captured by the British fleet.

Le Fier Rodrigue sailed again for America convoying a flotilla of vessels heavily laden with stores of all kinds. Beaumarchais was present at Rochelle to give his ships a send off. When he returned to Paris he learnt that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of Gudin who, forewarned in time, had taken refuge within the precincts of the Temple where the mediæval right of asylum still held good. It was the result of printing some verse too adulatory of Beaumarchais and too disparaging of the Maupeou Parliament in a new French journal, *Le Courrier de l'Europe*, published in London, of which, truth to tell, the editor was Théveneau de Morande and the director from whom it took its tone Beaumarchais himself. Gudin's verse consisted of an enthusiastic eulogy in honour of Beaumarchais and his latest success in the Courts. An alteration of one of the lines was the cause of the trouble raised by the members of the ex-Maupeou Parliament who were thus trying to strike indirectly at Beaumarchais. Gudin had stigmatised Goëzman as a "vile senator" but the printer, who doubtless was far from cherishing the Maupeou Parliament; substituted "profane senate" for "vile senator" and the Grand Council were up in arms.

Beaumarchais came to fetch Gudin and took him to his house, confident that he would not be arrested there and wrote to M. de Maurepas asking for his intervention. Gudin soon obtained his liberty and the case was dismissed but his advocate was suspended for three months for speaking his mind too boldly about the Grand Council. The authorities were increasingly making difficulties for themselves by their judgments *ab irato*, their contradictions and mistakes which they had subsequently to make good as best they could. Public opinion began to watch these events and to take sides against the Government in each new decision.

Beaumarchais was still up to his eyes in business. He was forty-seven and had reached the zenith of his fame, the culminating point in his career. He was yet to see great days, periods of brilliant success, but they were to grow less frequent and more scattered owing to the difficulties of the age, the new circumstances of his life, the social life around him, and he would no longer be able to overcome and conquer them with the easy unconcern, the dogged persistence, the happy versatility which he had hitherto displayed. He had consumed so much mental power, so much physical energy, struggled and fought so continuously and thrown himself the while so whole-heartedly into the lighter side of life for the last eight years and in particular since 1773!

CHAPTER XIII

"I have need to rest, not in idleness, I could not do that, but in change of occupation. That is my way of life. . . ."

BEAUMARCHAIS (Memorial against Kornmann).

FOR the time being he was still and even more than ever the famous man, the universal man, welcomed everywhere. He still displayed amazing activity, unfailing good humour, irrepressible high spirits, large-hearted generosity. He still took a delight in life, success, work.

It so happened that at this moment when he was overwhelmed with business, working with almost frantic intensity at every kind of undertaking each equally important, regretting that the day contained but twenty-four hours, he received a long and confidential letter from a young person unknown to him who, after setting forth her misfortunes, asked his advice. Such was his fame and such the good impression that he left behind him in the sunny town of Aix after his six weeks stay. The letter came from a new Magdalen who had once seen him and now chose him as her father confessor, her spiritual adviser:

"Aix, 1 December, 1778.

"A young person crushed beneath the weight of her sorrows addresses you in search of consolation. . . .

May I not hope that you will deign to take up my case and guide the conduct of a girl who is young and without experience . . . allow yourself to be moved by the story of my sufferings? . . .

"I have been forsaken by a man to whom I have sacrificed myself. I find myself the victim of seduction without having surrendered myself to it. I confess with tears and not with blushes that I yielded to love, to sentiment, but not to vice and wantonness which is so common in this depraved century. I deplored even in the arms of my lover the loss I was suffering. The more tears I shed over this painful sacrifice, the more merit I appeared to have in completing it. Yes, I venture to say that in the very bosom of love, I preserved the purity of my heart. . . . I struggled a long time, I was unable to conquer myself. . . .

"I enjoyed a certain respect. He has deprived me of it. I am only seventeen and my reputation is already ruined. . . . Alas! I feel that he is still dear to me. I cannot live without him. He must be my husband and shall! . . . Ah, monsieur, lend me your aid, hold out to me your generous hand. . . . I should wish to make my complaint at the foot of the throne. . . . You know the minister, he treats you with consideration. . . . Tell him that a young person who implores your assistance, implores his protection. . . . She asks only for justice. . . . Do not abandon me, monsieur, I place my destiny in your hands! . . . Deign to restore me to life. You alone can make me cling to an existence which my sorrows lead me to detest. If you

do me the favour of answering me, have the kindness to address your letter to Monsieur Vitalis, Rue du Grand Horloge, Aix, and above the address simply: To Mademoiselle Ninon."

For all the multiplicity of his occupations he found time to answer at length wisely and not without kindness this "little philosopher in petticoats," too greatly saturated with the spirit of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. He wrote as the good father of a family. And yet Eugénie, his own daughter, was two years old and her mother was still Mlle. de Villermawlaz:

"If you, young unknown, are the author of the letter which I have received from you, I must conclude that your wit is equal to your sensibility. . . .

"Your heart deceives you when it counsels you to take so violent a step as that which you wish to undertake, and although your misfortune may secretly interest all sensitive persons, it does not pertain to the class for which a remedy can be sought at the foot of the throne.

"Accordingly, gentle and witty Ninon . . . if you sincerely think me the man of honour whom you have appealed to, you should not hesitate to confide to me your name, your lover's name, his calling, your own, his disposition, his kind of ambition, and the difference in fortune which seems to keep him away from the girl whom he has deceived. . . . In choosing me for your advocate you must also think me worthy of being your confessor. . . . By what hope, by what promises were

you induced to grant the last favours? . . . This young man appears to me as unworthy of your regrets as of our united efforts. . . .

"Virtue does not consist in lavishing love upon an unworthy object, but in overcoming the love we feel for an object which is unworthy. . . . Forget him, my fair client, and may this unhappy experience of yourself, keep you on your guard against any other seduction of the same kind. Or if your little heart, led away by the charm of the past cannot fall in with the austerity of such advice, open this heart to me entirely, and let me see if after considering all the circumstances I can derive from them any consolation to offer you, any prospect which may be useful and agreeable to you. I promise you the most absolute discretion, and I conclude without addressing you any compliments because the frankest manner is that which must inspire you with the greatest confidence. But conceal nothing from me."

The correspondence continued for some time. Mlle. Ninon plied him with details as he wished and in an avalanche of letters told him at great length, with the most shameless candour, the story of her romance. But Beaumarchais in the whirlpool of his affairs, Beaumarchais soon to be fully engrossed in the war with England, whose ships were fighting beside the King's men of war, was obliged, after attempting to console her and induce in her a more reasonable frame of mind, to drop his correspondence with this youthful member of his flock. It was another good mark for him. Many another favour of like character stands to

his credit, some of them in the purely pecuniary domain. But his time was becoming more and more taken up.

While supervising the laying in of stores so as to send his ships again to America as soon as they returned or as soon as the hypothetical return cargoes in kind were received and discharged, he put his hand to many other enterprises. He wrote a Memorial to the Minister suggesting that the Calvinist traders of Bordeaux and La Rochelle should be allowed to become members of the Chamber of Commerce; another Memorial requesting the grant to traders of a privilege which the Farmers General denied them; he continued his efforts to establish the Bank of Discount; he lent several hundred thousand francs to his friends the Périers for the foundation of the Chaillot fire engine in connection with the water supply of Paris; he received dozens of plays from young unknown authors, many of whom were destined to remain unknown, asking his approval or revision as the case might be; he received an incredible number of letters requesting a loan or a position; an equally incredible number of applications from actresses for parts in his plays; the prospectuses of luckless inventors only wanting capital to exploit discoveries that would revolutionize the world. And he did his best to help each one—princes in difficulties as well as authors without publishers, lawyers without clients, mummers without parts. And withal he flung out a song here, an epigram there, wrote sentimental verse to ladies of his acquaintance. He even wrote stories when events lent him inspiration. For ever and for ever he was the same!

Banker and patron to the necessitous, he acted as intermediary with the Archbishop of Paris on behalf of his friend, the Prince de Nassau, who had married a divorced Polish woman and wished to have the marriage legitimised. Last but not least the famous bookseller Panckoucke, who had purchased Voltaire's unpublished works from his niece, Mme. Denis, and thought of bringing out a complete edition, found himself on the brink of bankruptcy and appealed to Beaumarchais.

He answered to the call. Invariably as practical as enthusiastic in his great enterprises, he at once sounded Maurepas, explaining that Panckoucke had been compelled to abandon his undertaking but that Catherine the Great of Russia had invited him to establish himself in St. Petersburg under her protection. In Beaumarchais's view it would be a disgrace to France if Voltaire's works had to be printed in Russian because they were prohibited in France—a prohibition altogether ineffectual for that matter since every prohibited work had a wider circulation than any other. In the face of these difficulties Panckoucke lost courage and abandoned the struggle.

Beaumarchais desired the support of the King in order to resume the project and to see to it that the opposition of the Clergy and Parliament should not prevent the publication and circulation of the works of the foremost writer of the eighteenth century.

Maurepas promised his own and the King's support. Thenceforward Beaumarchais threw himself with all

his feverish ardour into the preparation of a superb, a monumental edition. Still juggling with millions he bought from Panckoucke Voltaire's unpublished manuscripts to the amount of 160,000 francs; he dispatched a printer to London to purchase 150,000 francs' worth of the finest and best known printing types, those of Baskerville, the predecessor of Didot, a worthy emulator of Elzevier; he sent another agent to Holland to study the manufacture of the best paper; he leased for his printing works a large fort in Kehl, the property of the Margrave of Baden, after removing the moral scruples and hesitations of this austere little ruler by a financial solatium; finally he resuscitated certain almost deserted paper mills in Lorraine. It was in his mind, too, to employ as manager and chief printer, Restif de la Bretonne, well skilled, as we know, in the art of laying out the written book.

Meanwhile there was some movement in his business with America. On the 1st of January, 1779, after repeated demands to Congress, supported by Silas Deane and another American, William Carmichael, known to be in his favour, supplemented by the efforts of the youthful Francy, Beaumarchais received from the President of Congress a letter of thanks and a promise of payment.

But it had been no easy task. Arthur Lee had two brothers who were members of Congress and possessed considerable influence which they used against him. At length Arthur Lee was recalled, after making a vain attempt first to get rid of Silas Deane and then of

Franklin himself so as to remain the sole representative of the United States at the Court of France.

Soon after, in May, 1779, *Le Fier Rodrigue* set sail convoying fourteen vessels belonging to Rodrigue Hortalès & Co. Beaumarchais spent the entire spring in Rochefort and Bordeaux. Almost of necessity he had extended his commercial speculations for, reluctant to send more than the minimum of supplies to America until he received some payment, eager to ensure return cargoes and utilise all his vessels, he began to trade with some of the American states, Santo Domingo again, Martinique and Guadaloupe and the Lesser Antilles for his own private account. His ships brought back colonial products, principally sugar. All this was genuine trading by the genuine trader and satisfactory to him because it was lucrative and enabled his firm to "put a bold face on it" while waiting to receive from Congress—so ill-informed, so suspicious, so little disposed to haste—other tokens of acknowledgment than those, none too frequent for that matter, expressed in letters.

It was the first time a flotilla of his of such consequence had left the shores of France. Of course a catastrophe occurred during the voyage. Early in July *Le Fier Rodrigue* entered the Caribbean Sea, the shimmering blue waves gleaming in the sunlight, a favouring wind caressing her great brown sails. She bore a look of pride and power as her prow clove the swirling foam. Admiral d'Estaing with his fleet was cruising in the same waters, preparing to give battle to the English

Admiral Biron off the island of Grenada, a British possession. When *Le Fier Rodrigue* came alongside after an exchange of signals and conversation Admiral d'Estaing ordered Captain Montaud, in the service of M. de Beaumarchais, to leave his merchant vessels to the mercy of their fate and assigned *Le Fier Rodrigue*, in truth a fine and powerfully built vessel, a post in the battle line. Utterly defenceless, Beaumarchais's flotilla was sacrificed and though the vessels crowded on all sail they were destined to fall into the hands of privateers or other English ships.

On the 12th of July *Le Fier Rodrigue* took her part in the battle, which lasted the whole day, side by side with *Le Languedoc*, the Admiral's ship. Admiral d'Estaing won a victory but *Le Fier Rodrigue* lost her pride—her captain fell. His brother mustered the diminished roll and surveyed the terrible havoc; and Admiral d'Estaing while complimenting King Figaro's sailors on their heroic behaviour under fire determined not to part company with *Le Fier Rodrigue* until they reached French waters. To console Beaumarchais for his losses he sent him a letter of congratulation which was included in his despatches to Sartines. The letter reached him at the beginning of September:

"On board *Le Languedoc*,
"Roadstead of St. George, Isle of Grenada,
"July 12, 1779.

"I have only time, monsieur, to write to you that *Le Fier Rodrigue* has held herself well in the battle line

and contributed to the success of the King's arms. You will pardon me the more for having employed her so well since your interests will not suffer—be assured of that . . ."

Why of course! The gallant admiral was taking too much for granted on that point. But it was indeed an honour for a private person to see his ship contribute to the success of the King's arms! Beaumarchais was not a little proud of it.

On the return of the fleet in December Captain Montaud's brother was recommended for the cross and Beaumarchais gratified the wishes of one of his officers by causing him to be transferred to the regular French navy—an officer who eventually became Admiral Ganteaume.

But what of himself? He had lost his warship for he could not count on the services of *Le Fier Rodrigue* for some time at least. Moreover, he would have to refit her at his own expense. He did not yet know the fate of his merchant vessels. He took his revenge by writing a song on Admiral Biron!

He petitioned the King for a temporary loan of 400,000 francs as an act of grace, reserving to himself the right to claim compensation for his losses when he knew the full circumstances. Louis XVI was too delighted with the victory to refuse him. And business pursued its course. In December the royal fleet, including *Le Fier Rodrigue*, returned in triumph. At the same time Beaumarchais received from America,

in addition to the news that a dozen of his merchant vessels had been captured by the English, bills of exchange to the value of 2,544,000 francs on account of amounts due to him drawn at three months on Franklin. Beaumarchais made a wry face: "So at the end of six years, having dispatched up to now stores and goods to the value of over six million francs and received two cargoes worth 150,000 francs each, I shall receive if all goes well 2,500,000 francs—cost to me 2,200,000 francs. I shall have to wait for compensation from the King for my disastrous losses of the year. All this if between now and then no new catastrophe happens. As to my business with Virginia and South Carolina, things are even worse. The paper money with which I was paid is worth nothing—cost to me 3,000,000 francs. Result: all my purely trading profits are swallowed up and my capital as well. It means ruin! Fortunately I have my Voltaire."

Voltaire indeed! The delectable vision of an edition of fifteen thousand copies superbly printed on fine paper and splendidly bound in seventy-two volumes rose up before him! And another and cheaper edition in ninety volumes! Here, before long, were riches without doubt.

But the time had not yet come. The British Government thought it well to employ the pen of Gibbon, the historian, to denounce officially to the world the breaches of faith and insincerity of the French Government during the peace up to the 18th of June, 1778. Neither Beaumarchais nor the firm of Rodrigue Hortalès & Co. was spared of course in this *Justificative*

Memorial of the Court of London. Turning for a moment from his shipping interests Beaumarchais penned a reply. His first thought was to lodge a complaint and bring an action against George III of England. But that would have been going too far. He was content to publish: *Observations on the Justificative Memorial of the Court of London by P.A. C. de Beaumarchais, shipowner and French citizen. Dedicated to his Country*. Here were words in pretty frequent use during the Revolutionary period and not yet done with.

The whole thing was very clever and of interest to a goodly number of patriotic citizens. He discussed political and diplomatic questions and stoutly defended his country and himself. Unfortunately he committed a serious error. He alleged that a secret article existed in the treaty of 1763 whereby England sought to impose on France a limitation of armaments by fixing the maximum number of her naval units.

Honour to whom honour is due! The Duc de Choiseul, the Duc de Praslin, and the Duc de Nivernois, all three friends of Beaumarchais in his early days, were the promoters of this treaty of 1763. They believed that his statement was a put up business and were incensed to find themselves charged with accepting so absurd and ill-judged a clause, which for that matter was non-existent. They complained to Vergennes, who called upon Beaumarchais to withdraw his allegation. He caused a correction to be made in the *Courrier de l'Europe*, ascribing the misapprehension to a printer's error but substituted another inaccuracy which, how-

ever, was of no consequence. But three friends had been transformed into three enemies. Not for the first time had his friends become his enemies. Vergennes brought the complaint before the Council of Ministers and a decree was issued suppressing Beaumarchais's pamphlet. Once again he had the good fortune to get out of a difficulty without serious consequences, but to issue publicly an unfounded statement on a matter of recent political history was an offence that came within the law.

Never at rest for a moment he resumed his work for the Theatrical Legislative Bureau. In this he was inspired by a commendable spirit of concord for he allowed public opinion time for reflection, and hoped to achieve some practical result. He gave a dinner party at his house which brought together authors, actors, actresses and M. Gerbier, a famous advocate who represented the actors and was to plead for them. On the 1st of March the Council of State issued its first decree; on the 22nd the decree was revoked. At last, on the 9th of December a third decree terminated the quarrel. Here as in other things undertaken by him he tried to do good whether his personal interests were involved or not, and brought down upon himself jealousy and rancour. Thus an author of indefinite talent, one Dubuisson, delivered himself in the preface to *Nadir*, a tragedy, of a furious diatribe against the Theatrical Legislative Bureau, and in particular Beaumarchais, its prime mover, whom he accused of self-seeking in the deliberations and decisions over which

he presided. Dubuisson was a Creole and Gudin referred to him as a "Carribee." Had Dubuisson acted alone the incident might well have been allowed to pass, but Suard, a critic of ability with a malicious pen, stood behind him. Suard was the censor and as censor he approved Dubuisson's polemics. Beaumarchais drew up a complaint to the minister and the minister imposed silence.

Nevertheless a great step forward had been made. Regulations now governed the rights of authors and actors and, however imperfect these might be, they paved the way for better methods which were to be evolved in time to come. But M. Gerbier was in reality too eloquent and succeeded in detracting from the interest and value of the work of the Theatrical Legislative Bureau. It was decided at last that authors should receive from thence onwards a seventh of the actual receipts taken by the actors instead of a twelfth calculated on some fanciful basis. Gerbier secured for the benefit of actors the maintenance of the ridiculous principle by which a piece in given circumstances "fell within the rules," and what was more serious obtained for them a considerable advantage. Any play, the receipts for which failed at any one performance to reach 2,300 francs in winter and 1,800 francs in summer, was declared to "fall within the rules," that is to say to become the absolute property of the actors. Such a rule placed in the hands of the actors an easy method of "tricking" the author. The most valuable result of the work accomplished under Beaumarchais's leader-

ship was the formation of a Society of Authors. Though not yet organised in any real sense of the term, of course, authors none the less met together from time to time, the spirit of unity among them was called into being, and differences which had hitherto been taken into court were settled amicably among themselves and the actors. In the birth of this new feeling, indeed, lay the hope that one day a general principle would regulate the respective rights of actors, authors, theatrical managers and publishers.

Simultaneously he continued the work of organising his printing business in Kehl. Machinery and workmen were slowly gathered together. He was on the spot and appointed his agent, Le Tellier, as manager, a clever but susceptible young man, responsible for the negotiations with the Margrave of Baden. He wanted to go ahead and have everything in readiness by 1783. As soon as the business was in working order he returned to Paris. But every now and then his presence was needed to set matters straight. The foreman and Le Tellier, who aimed at sole control, were at loggerheads, the workmen were exasperated by the conceited young man's harsh and overbearing manner and threatened to leave Kehl, and the printing made but slow progress beset as it was with all manner of difficulties.

And then the Margrave of Baden took it into his head to demand the exclusion of *Candide* from the complete edition of Voltaire's works, the witty *Candide* which held up to ridicule Westphalian Castles, the comforting doctrine of Pangloss, the Baron de Thunder-

ten-Tronck, and his aristocratic sister, who refused to marry the unhappy gentleman with a genealogical tree of only seventy-one quarterings; to say nothing of Catherine the Great who threatened to take diplomatic action if Beaumarchais did not keep from the public eye certain correspondence with Voltaire already printed, which now had to be cancelled at heavy cost, of course . . . Endless attention was devoted to this famous edition, and, moreover, the publication of Jean Jacques Rousseau's works and two others was undertaken.

Beaumarchais was now making headway. He plucked up heart again in his American transactions and carried them with a high hand. In August, 1781, he was in La Rochelle joining forces with new partners and building new ships, though he found "the cost of construction devilish heavy" as he said to Francy back from America.

His attempt to act as matrimonial agent for the Prince de Nassau by persuading the Archbishop of Paris to recognise his marriage was a failure, but he none the less remained on terms of close friendship with the Prince and his wife whom the clergy alone refused to recognise. It was an onerous friendship for his pocket. It is the business of every good cashier to grumble a little when he finds his employer opening his purse strings too wide. Philippe Gudin, Beaumarchais's cashier, took it upon himself to grumble, as was proper, about the Nassaus. But Beaumarchais could not refuse and the Prince and Princess, utter spend-

thrifts, freely borrowed money from his coffers. The Princess made a point of pronouncing his name *Bon*marchais—gratitude hardly to the purpose—and knew the way to his heart and pocket: "My dear *Bon*marchais, I am in despair. I must absolutely go to Versailles tomorrow and I haven't a single écu. Send me, if you can, a few louis." On another occasion it was put in different language: "It's a long time since I have seen you, my dear *Bon*marchais, and you are about to read the proof of it. I am again without a sou. Send me a few louis, my friend, if you wish me to dine tomorrow."

As to the Prince, who lived to amuse himself when he was not in quest of warlike enterprises, he allowed Beaumarchais to provide him with his equipment, his clothes, his food. When he had no wish to make direct demands on him he sent his creditors to him and Beaumarchais arranged with them as best he could, that is to say he disbursed in the course of a few years 125,000 francs for the Prince and Princess. It was flattering to his pride to be the foster father of a handsome and gallant prince and a charming princess! . . . Then again Mme. de Beauharnais made representations to him on behalf of her old friend Dorat, threatened with starvation, and Beaumarchais perforce came to his assistance. But it was not the way to fill his coffers nor to improve his financial position.

CHAPTER XIV

". . . Provided I do not speak in my writings of authority or religion or politics or morality or people in office or influential corporations . . . or of anybody who belongs to anything, I am at liberty to say what I please under the eye of some two or three censors. . . ."

The Marriage of Figaro.

THE Nassaus, of course, often invited Beaumarchais to dine with them. It was the least they could do but in the end it was he who in one way or another paid the reckoning. One evening in October, 1781, talk at the dinner table turned upon a pitiful story which was going the rounds. A certain Guillaume Kornmann, governor of the Quinze Vingts in Paris—the Asylum for the Blind—caused his wife, who was expecting her third child, to be shut up in a house of detention in virtue of a lettre de cachet obtained by him, after making an accusation of adultery against her. Beaumarchais was asked to interest himself in her fate but at first refused on the ground that "he had never done a good and generous action which had not caused him anguish."

"This is the story," said a member of the Parliament present at the dinner. "The documents in corroboration are in my possession and you shall see them presently. Kornmann's wife, almost a child, became

an orphan when she was eleven years of age and was married to him by her family when she was fifteen. She was a native of Basle and he of Strasburg. They came to live in Paris. They had two children and are expecting a third. But they did not live happily together. Kornmann induced his wife to sign a deed of gift whereby her fortune passed into his hands. During the night of the 3rd of August two and a half months ago she was removed from her house. She was told that the Lieutenant General of Police wanted to see her about the divorce that she was bringing against her husband in accordance with the laws of her country. She was taken to the house of detention in the Rue de Belleford and told, in the name of the King, that she must stay there. For some days she gave way to a frenzy of despair in the wretched place. And it is here that she is to have her child.

"She petitioned the Chambre des Vacations, stating the facts. Kornmann, indeed, would like to effect a reconciliation because his fortune is at stake and his wife's money, since she is a prisoner, cannot definitely become his without her signature. As to the charge of adultery, I shall be able to show you this in its true aspect. Kornmann was acquainted in Strasburg with M. Daudet de Jossan, the syndic royal, and he asked him to obtain for him, through his relations with the Prince de Montbarey, a place, that is to say an administrative position. In 1779 Kornmann was on the best of terms with Daudet de Jossan. He invited him to his house and introduced him to his wife. Bear in mind

that the poor thing was barely twenty-two years old, was married seven years before and never loved her husband. Kornmann very soon discovered that Daudet de Jossan was endeavouring to conceal the fact that he had fallen in love with this charming young woman, so unhappy in her married life. Then he grasped the monetary advantage to be derived from this state of affairs. Daudet de Jossan is an honest man, but thoughtless, and was deeply in love. Mme. Kornmann is an honest woman, but unhappy, young and inexperienced. Kornmann is an old man, a crafty scoundrel and hypocrite. This Tartuffe practically handed over and sold his wife to Daudet de Jossan. Under every sort of pretext he left Daudet de Jossan and his wife in Paris, made arrangements to travel with them, but disappeared, leaving them together. He even confided his wife by letter to his *dear friend.* He was sure of getting her money now for Daudet de Jossan would do his best to that end. He threw his wife, as yet guiltless, into the arms of the wavering Daudet de Jossan and wrote to him while away, advising him to bring the matter to a successful issue and to tell his wife, who was resisting and struggling against her love for Daudet de Jossan, that he knew everything and accepted everything. That was how matters stood less than three months ago when suddenly the minister, the Prince de Montbarey, fell from office. Daudet de Jossan could do nothing more for Kornmann, who turned sour, tried to pick a quarrel, and claimed the payment of a loan of 3600 francs. The result was a rupture between the

two men. And then Mme. Kornmann grasped the position and renewed her demand for a divorce. Daudet de Jossan, in despair at having all but lent himself to such horrible proceedings, made himself scarce and kept silent. Kornmann had no wish for a divorce which would give his wife her freedom, money, liberty to talk and unmask his own conduct. It was after this that he struck the blow which I have told you about. My evidence? Here we have the poor thing's reply, her letters to Daudet de Jossan in which she guards herself against temptation, Kornmann's letters to Daudet de Jossan in which in veiled language the horrible bargain is revealed and the whole manœuvre can be seen."

The Nassaus, touched by the story, were ready to make every effort to ensure at least that Mme. Kornmann's child should be born anywhere but in a place where mad women and prostitutes were incarcerated. Beaumarchais asked to see the letters and read them. His blood rose against the injustice. He hesitated no longer. He went to work with all his feverish activity to obtain the release of the unfortunate woman from the house of detention. Maurepas, on whom he relied in a special degree, passed away just then.

At last, on the 27th of December, after placing a summary of the facts before the King, he succeeded in obtaining the necessary order and Mme. Kornmann was conducted to the house of a surgeon-accoucheur. Beaumarchais met Mme. Kornmann, who expressed her deep gratitude for his intervention. But both he

and the Prince de Nassau had to make many journeys between Versailles and Paris before they succeeded in ensuring this simple act of humanity. Kornmann was, of course, raging within himself, but dared not defy so formidable a fighting man as Beaumarchais. He held his peace for the moment but he intended on the first opportunity to "catch out" in one way or the other his wife's rescuer.

The incident soon passed from Beaumarchais's mind amid his varied occupations. He was compelled to dismiss Le Tellier, now become unendurable. In revenge the young man did his utmost to entice the workmen away, and one fine evening he came back with a few men who had followed his lead and wilfully damaged the machinery which resulted in new delay and a new lawsuit. In short, the publication of Voltaire's works was a long way off, but by the aid of a clever prospectus and the institution of a lottery in favour of the first four thousand subscribers, Beaumarchais obtained about eighteen hundred orders. He was never to increase the number. To add to his joys the cashier fled across the frontier with a part of the subscription money.

As to America, Silas Deane was sent by Congress to France to settle the amount of the American debt to Beaumarchais. On the 9th of April, 1784, the account was agreed at 3,600,000 francs, not including the bills of exchange which he was now beginning to discount as best he could. The amount itself was definitely fixed but he would still have to wait for payment.

And now for *The Marriage of Figaro!* Public curiosity was still excited over it. In September, 1781, the Théâtre Français had accepted it with enthusiasm. Beaumarchais at once saw Le Noir, the Lieutenant General of Police, Sartines's successor—Sartines's incompetence had brought about his resignation as Minister of the Navy—and said to him: "Whatever you do, don't allow any person to read the play except yourself and the censor, whose name I should like you to give me—neither clerk nor secretary. I fear the lack of understanding, the tendency to foolish talk and the complaisance of such persons, and as the play is arousing an immense amount of curiosity I don't want any indiscreet word to give rise to rumours and slander before the performance." Le Noir promised to keep the play in his office. Coquely, the lawyer-censor, passed it subject to a few corrections. But the King wanted to hear it and to the Queen's satisfaction it was arranged that it should be read at Versailles. After dinner the reading was begun by one of the Court. The Queen and the ladies of the Court were highly amused. But the King paced up and down, his hands behind his back, his great prominent eyes rolling in every direction, while now and again his fingers twitched nervously. It was obvious that he was displeased. At the finish the ladies chattered, repeating the witty sayings that most appealed to them. Louis XVI rapped with his ring on the marble mantelpiece. Everybody was silent. Then he said, slowly:

"It is detestable, unactable, it will never be played."

"Still it is very witty," said the Queen.

"I tell you, madame, that I won't have it played. Why to be consistent the Bastille should be pulled down if it were publicly acted."

The idea was already a common topic of conversation, but the words were prophetic. *The Marriage of Figaro* was the first shot to shake the foundations of the old prison house. Beaumarchais cast the bullet in the hot mould of his lawsuits, his experience of the Court and the world, and mixed with it to a greater degree than in *The Barber of Seville*, political and social reflections of a general character, scourging the aristocracy and castigating privilege through the mouth of Figaro

Figaro! It was a resounding name for a rebel, sonorous as the blast of a bugle, light as a feather, flashing like lightning, swift as a gust of wind. For ever and for ever he was the same! And yet, confronted with the King's interdiction, he would have to struggle against authority, against Louis XVI alone who was dead set against the play, who in truth was its best advertisement and who, by forbidding the tasty and piquant dish, whetted the appetite of hundreds of Adams and thousands of Eves longing to savour it.

It involved him in a continuous and tenacious offensive over a period of three years, the usual, the only, the best offensive—an appeal to public opinion. Beaumarchais read the play at the houses of his friends. He read it to poor old Maurepas, sinking rapidly to the grave, but one day well enough to hear *The Follies*

of the Day. Maurepas was greatly amused by it but at a loss to understand how Beaumarchais with so many irons in the fire managed to write a new play. Catherine the Great sent him word that *The Barber of Seville* had been played over fifty times in St. Petersburg and she would like the first performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* to be given at the Court of Russia. One of the mummers of the French company at the Court wrote to Beaumarchais in the name of M. de Bibikoff, the Grand Chamberlain, asking him "to be kind enough to send me *The Marriage of Figaro* which I hear is a sequel to *The Barber of Seville* and written by you, monsieur, in the same manner, which is sufficient to sing its praises in advance."

Beaumarchais conducted his readings very adroitly and the most illustrious of the illustrious did not hesitate to solicit the favour of a hearing. He declined some of the requests and in other cases did not give way unless he were asked at least two or three times. But he offered to read the play to intimate friends. While waiting for *The Marriage of Figaro* the Théâtre Français revived *The Barber of Seville*. The Princesse de Lamballe besought a reading; the Duc de Richelieu flattered him with a similar request; and the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, afterwards Paul I, newly arrived in Paris with his Duchess instructed Baron de Grimm to express a desire on their behalf to hear the piece. A picked company, chosen with great care, was present on these occasions. Distinguished persons from the provinces and even bishops and archbishops came to

listen, and for these drawing room readings Beaumarchais made use of an elegant manuscript written on fine paper from his paper mills in Lorraine and held together by rose-coloured ribbons. During the winter he went the round of the drawing rooms with his elegant rose-beribboned manuscript under his arm, the alluring title of which he himself had diligently ornamented in tasteful lettering. . . .

He comes in smiling, smartly dressed, young-looking despite his fifty years. The hostess, making play with her fan, hastens to greet him and with a rustle of silks leads him by the hand into the already brightly illumined drawing room fragrant alike with the scent of musk and tobacco, and as they enter the buzz of conversation becomes subdued. Card players almost reluctantly leave the green baize, young gallants cease their love making to push forward chairs and fauteuils while Beaumarchais exchanges greetings, handshakes, embraces with one and another. Soon the company is comfortably settled, silence gradually falls, the lady of the house whispers in the master's ear and returns smiling among her guests. Manuscript in hand Beaumarchais walks slowly over to the small platform hung with velvet used by the musicians. He gives a careless flip to his lace sleeves, clears his voice, makes a studied display of the diamond with a thousand gleams, the gift of the Empress, opens the pages of his opuscle with a sweeping gesture and recites a little clap-trap introduction. . . . And now he is well started, emphasising the dialogue with a look, a move-

ment of his hand, gestures neither excessive nor ill-judged, assisting with all his being his expressive enunciation. He reads with remarkable talent, and under its influence the weaknesses of the play disappear, its qualities become magnified, he never fails to achieve the conquest of his audience. . . .

Beaumarchais imagined himself sufficiently powerful to reopen the question of its public performance with the Minister of Justice but met with no success. He fell back on the Lieutenant General of Police, whereupon Louis XVI, when he heard of it, observed: "You will see Beaumarchais will have more influence than the Minister of Justice." While he was bestirring himself in this way Maurepas died.

He continued to hold the reins of a mass of business affairs, none of which he could afford to neglect for a moment. With the help of Ministers he undertook the reorganisation of the farmers general. But Maurepas, his sure support, was dead, and an enemy, an anonymous enemy of course—alleged at first to be M. d'Espremesnil, and then his old friend the Comte de Lauraguais —sprung upon the Parliament a denunciation of the public subscription of Voltaire's works. Necker, the Minister, was no friend of Beaumarchais's and sought to injure him. The project for providing Paris with a water supply was in difficulties. Syndics, river side residents, including the water carriers, were up in arms against the scheme of the brothers Périer and as Beaumarchais was a director and shareholder, this too added to his financial anxieties.

Some time before it was learnt that the French Fleet, under Admiral Comte de Grasse, Commander in Chief in the Antilles, had been destroyed and the Comte taken prisoner on the 12th of April. Paris was flung into consternation. The King was deeply distressed. Carried away by a sudden impulse of patriotism Beaumarchais instituted in Paris at great expense to himself and with a flourish of trumpets a public subscription as an expression of popular feeling, and addressed a letter enclosing one hundred louis to each of the seven great seaport towns, inviting them to offer the King a ship to replace those lost by the Admiral. It was only after the event that he wrote to Vergennes for permission, adding: "If by chance you were to disapprove of the idea which occurred to me it would be too late to stop the effect of it for already I am glad to say it is a great success." Vergennes sent him his commendation "as a citizen."

He had constantly to be travelling to keep an eye on his fleet. Always on the move, he was at Rochefort on the 10th of August: "After travelling in abominable weather," he wrote to Francy, "I arrived yesterday at La Rochelle and tonight at Rochefort. I shall lose no time in transacting the indispensable part of my business here so as to get to Bordeaux as soon as possible as some fresh information that reached me on the way has determined me to go there at once unless it is absolutely necessary for me to return to Nantes. . . ." He wrote to Mlle. Villermawlaz by the same post: "And so, my dear, well splashed with mud and wet to

the skin, here we are at Rochefort which I shall leave tomorrow afternoon or Tuesday morning at latest. Write everything to me at Bordeaux. My love to the mother, daughter and friends. . . ."

He spent several months in Bordeaux, arriving on the 14th of August and remaining until Christmas. He learnt from Francy that his vessel *La Ménagère* had been fitted out to perfection, that another, *L'Aimable Eugénie*, instead of being six hundred tons burden was barely five hundred, and that *L'Alexandre* leaked like a sieve. On the 27th of August he informed him that he had loaded *L'Alexandre* with "seventy-five casks of good wine and three hundred barrels of the finest Moissac flour."

Just before returning to Paris he tried to prevent the sailing of five of his ships though they had been waiting the propitious moment for some time. He was advised that an English privateer lay in wait for them on the high seas, and he hastened to Pauillac, the port of embarkation, intending to hold them up. It was a wasted journey: "All my promptest efforts to stop the sailing of these ships," he wrote to Francy, "only resulted in a failure by four hours, after having tried in vain for four months to push them forward. Let them therefore sail." Obviously. But they no sooner left the roadstead than the five vessels were captured. It meant the loss of two million francs.

Beaumarchais returned to Paris on the 1st of January, 1783, to receive at long last the first published copies of Voltaire's works. From that time he foresaw

a failure which would involve him in a loss of at least a million francs. And claims began to pour in from the workmen at Kehl and from the subscribers and booksellers.

At this stage he made a trip to London on business, returning to Paris to give his attention to the classification and enumeration of Voltaire's later works. It was a laborious task and entailed sorting old manuscripts of works attributed to Voltaire, many of which were not from his pen, the revision of manuscripts, the arrangement of correspondence, and the reading of proofs, annotations and notes which Condorcet had undertaken to superintend. Beaumarchais added a few notes to the passages in the correspondence concerning himself. Voltaire had written to M. d'Argental in 1774 during the Goëzman case: "A hasty, excitable, impetuous man like Beaumarchais might box his wife's ears, and even box the ears of his two wives, but he does not poison them." The correspondent general of the Literary and Typographical Society of Kehl, "which is myself," said Beaumarchais, added a note: "I certify that this Beaumarchais has sometimes had his ears boxed by a woman like most men who have loved them much but has never been guilty of the ignominy of lifting his hand against any one of them."

No tangible financial success has resulted from this or his American speculations so far. In a letter addressed to the Minister on the 15th of March, 1783, he implored him to hasten the payment of the indemnity due to him for war losses at sea. His position was

desperate and he was driving towards bankruptcy. Bales of merchandise to the value of 80,000 francs in his ship *L'Aigle* were seized by the English; tea to the value of 100,000 francs in warehouses at Morlaix was submerged by a storm and flood which inundated the docks. Moreover, during the last two years, at the request of Maurepas, he had been retrieving secretly for the State the parchments and titles of nobility from the Cour des Comptes, which were disappearing and being sold to the second-hand dealers. Right and left he redeemed these archives at a cost to himself of 200,000 francs, never receiving any monetary return. Today they form an important feature in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

If only he could attain the joy of a literary success which *The Marriage of Figaro* ought to achieve! He clamoured—the paradox of it—for rigorous but fair criticism. The Lieutenant General of Police did his utmost to discover it for him, and four or five of the most austere persons competent for the task carefully sifted the wit of *The Follies of the Day* and one after the other declared in all seriousness that they could find nothing in it to reprove except a few trifling phrases and the piece could be safely performed.

While waiting for the removal of the royal interdiction the play was put in rehearsal. The wind at Versailles seemed to be blowing from a favourable quarter. At Maisons Lafitte for the Comte d'Artois, at Trianon for the Queen, at Brunois for the Duc de Chartres, and even at the Théâtre Français the play was rehearsed.

The Comte d'Artois led the movement in its favour. In May, 1783, the French comedians were amazed to receive a command to prepare it "for the service of the Court," that is for a performance before the royal household. It was without doubt a step forward which was bound to lead before long to the Comédie Française and the great public.

It was the great lords, those who had taken the trouble to be born, who supported the play. They had taken the trouble to be born! They little dreamt that ten years later the thought itself would constitute in the minds of the people, become supreme, the great grievance against them, and lead them to the scaffold. . . . Come, gallant little nobles of France, be merry, make the most of the time that remains to you to revel in the wit and humour of Figaro! . . . It was in the very Hall of the Menus Plaisirs where the authorities were to give them the maiden performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* that the States General met six years later and left for the Jeu de Paume under the leadership of Bailly and Mirabeau. . . .

After some fifteen rehearsals, costing as many thousands of francs, the appointed day, the 13th of June, arrived. From midday the adjoining streets were thronged with carriages. It was a beautiful day and a motley stream of guests poured forth at every moment —great ladies in brightly coloured toilettes, noble lords in full dress, each one sporting in his elegantly gloved hand a card of invitation bearing the image of Figaro.

Beaumarchais was in the seventh heaven. He received all these great lords and ladies with easy elegance, all courtesy and attention, flinging out a witticism here, a gallant compliment there, ever and anon slipping behind the scenes with an air of mystery, to return with a satisfied smile. On his way he kisses his little daughter Eugénie—she is now six years old—quiet and good, seated in a stage box with her mother to whom Gudin endeavours to show off his wit.

Alas! Louis XVI could not refrain from sending the Duc de Villequier to the actors half an hour before the curtain was to be rung up with an order expressly forbidding the performance under pain of incurring His Majesty's *indignation.*

Beaumarchais was speechless. Actors and audience bowed to the inevitable; but they left the theatre murmuring. It was a sudden whim of Louis XVI's in his own manner, the manner of the weak man, the blunderer if there ever was one, desiring to enforce his authority. After the audience left, Beaumarchais wept and raged against Heaven and the King. And then he went quietly home. It was the story of *Tartuffe* over again after an interval of one hundred and twenty years.

Four persons were hostile to him: the King, the King's brother, the Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII, M. de Miromesnil, the Minister of Justice, who had never forgiven him since the day seven years before when M. de Maurepas had admonished him on Beaumarchais's account, and lastly the famous Suard,

a disagreeable little whipper-snapper, jealous of anyone with more brains than himself—that is to say of the great majority of literary men.

On Beaumarchais's side were ranged most of the Court, led by the Comte d'Artois, afterwards Charles X, and nine-tenths of the public. The rehearsals were continued or rather resumed. The Comte de Lauraguais, to whom Beaumarchais had just refused a loan, and who imagined that he was depicted in the character of the Comte Almaviva, and in particular in the famous monologue in the fifth act, circulated the prospectus of a *Life of Beaumarchais* in four volumes. The prospectus, of course, was issued anonymously. The life was to contain all the more or less atrocious slanders and scandals which had been current about Beaumarchais for thirty years. But it never went beyond the prospectus.

He made no reply, but whether from contempt or indifference, it was the first time that he kept silent under attack. Possibly he had renounced waging war; possibly he was too fully occupied with the performance of his play before the Comte de Vaudreuil at Gennevilliers to attach any importance to this form of malevolence. On the 26th of September the play was performed but only before a privileged audience. The Queen was to have been present but was prevented by sudden indisposition. The Comte d'Artois, the Duchesse de Polignac, the Princesse de Lamballe, for whom a private performance had already been given, were present. But it was entirely a case of private theatricals

and the King persisted in his refusal to authorise a performance at the theatre.

Beaumarchais made a request for a new examination of his piece. And after seven censors had spoken the walls fell.

Already in February, 1784, Beaumarchais had several ministers on his side, and growing more confident, resumed the rehearsals at the Théâtre Français. It was, however, another false hope. Nevertheless, Louis XVI, who had put off the production for three years, at length yielded, weary of the struggle, under the pressure of his younger brother and the Queen, and the piece was announced a week in advance for production at the Théâtre Français on Tuesday the 27th of April, 1784, under the title of *La Folle Journée ou Le Mariage de Figaro*.

And indeed it was a day of follies to the point of scandal. It was Beaumarchais's day of revenge. During the preceding days he received hundreds of letters soliciting the favour of a free seat from playgoers, ordinary sightseers, lawyers, courtiers, and princes and princesses of the royal family. Great ladies arrived in the early morning. The performance was to last from five to nine in the evening and in order to be sure of places ladies settled themselves and dined in the actresses' dressing rooms. At eleven o'clock, the box office, not due to open until four o'clock, was besieged by footmen from the great families. All round the theatre up to the hour of the performance a motley swarm of army officers, cooks, ladies of high rank

elbowed beggars, hawkers and Savoyards. The guard was unable to keep back the pressure of the crowd, the iron gates were torn down and windows were broken by the shouting, jostling, fighting multitude.

Inside the theatre the public watched the arrivals amid a great hubbub. M. de Suffren, a popular naval man, was loudly applauded. Beaumarchais himself was in a private box screened with lattice work, seated between two clerical friends—what strange patronage! —the Abbé de Calonne, brother of the Minister of Finance, and the Abbé Sabatier de Cabres, a man with some pretensions to wit, high in favour.

At last the curtain was raised, and the play swept forward to the fourth act with great success. The fourth act dragged somewhat, the fifth act opened better than ever, but Figaro's monologue roused a storm of mingled cheers and protests:

"Because you are a great lord you fancy yourself a great genius. . . . Nobility, fortune, rank, place—all these things make you so proud. But what have you done to deserve them? You have taken the trouble to be born. . . . While I—s'death! . . ."

The play itself? Its chief merit lay in its sparkling wit. The subject was scarcely new save in certain incidents. It was the manner in which it was treated that roused the interest. Beaumarchais had sketched his plot ten years before; it was almost commonplace. It was the way in which the characters were presented —Figaro, the foremost, as well as Double Main, the least important, or Cherubin, the most charming, or

Basil, the most repulsive—their movement and audacity, that enchanted and inflamed the pit. Some protested, scandalised. On the fifth performance, at which the Queen was to have been present, though she did not come, thousands of leaflets were thrown down by the gods in the gallery and fluttered in the auditorium when the curtain was about to rise. A great commotion and jostling ensued, hands were outstretched and the audience began to read the leaflet. They were so greatly amused that the performance was delayed for half an hour in spite of repeated raisings of the curtain. On the leaflet were these lines:

Wedged in the wings, I saw the other night
The latest thing in plays, amazing sight!
Eluding the police, its scenes outrage
The charm and glory of the Gallic stage.
Each actor is a vice, each plays his part
In all its horror with disgraceful art.
Bartholo grasps at gold, while all the time
Count Almaviva subsidises crime;
His better half's no better in our view
Than an adult'ress, *Marceline* a shrew;
Of *Double Main* a common thief is made,
And *Basil* plies the scandalmonger's trade;
Franchette, too innocent, is lost to shame;
Cherubic *Cherubin*, true to his name
Is all aflame with love, but closely seen,
This page is just a charerted libertine.
Susan, shrewd girl, shares too the darling boy,
His mistress' plaything and his master's toy.
What a high tone! What morals they disclose!
The spirit of the work? Brid'oison knows.
And as for *Figaro!*—Why blink the fact?
His likeness to his patron is exact;

So striking and so scandalous their ways,
We fear them both and shudder, while we gaze.
At last—to see all vice together knit—
A shout of "Author!" rises from the pit.

"Delightful, isn't it?" said Beaumarchais, laughing outright with his friends. Sophie Arnould declared to those who wondered whether the piece could succeed: "No . . . it's a play that will fall flat—forty times in succession!"

In truth *The Marriage of Figaro* was the greatest success of the century. It afforded, of course, the pretext for a number of epigrams from the envious and Beaumarchais's enemies. But the impression made by it was none the less enormous. To the music of the songs in *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, verses and even other songs were scribbled. Nor did the play "fall" even at its fortieth performance. In October Beaumarchais wrote a prologue for the fiftieth performance and gave the play a new impetus by opening a "subscription in aid of nursing mothers," to which and the establishment of a new charitable institution he undertook to devote his entire receipts. The experiment was none too great a success in Paris, but the Archbishop lent his aid in Lyons, and Beaumarchais and the Archbishop between them founded the "Benevolent Maternal Institution."

Meantime, the War of American Independence had drawn to a close and Beaumarchais was still waiting for his three and a half million francs. The Périers, scheme of "The Paris Water Company" was making

progress and its shares were successfully placed on the market. Once more Beaumarchais assembled the Society of Authors at his house. He had a new proposal to submit to them. He suggested asking the Parliament for a standing order, settling the rights of authors in provincial theatres which hitherto performed plays at their own sweet will without rendering any payment whatsoever. Beaumarchais's proposal was that the same principle which was in force in Paris should be applied to the provincial theatres. As in the past his fellow authors expressed their gratitude and invited him to undertake the necessary measures.

Figaro continued its triumphal progress. One day a song hawker stepped up to a carriage in which some fair ladies and two brilliantly attired officers were seated, offering for sale the songs from *The Marriage of Figaro*. The officers told the man flatly to go about his business, whereupon an onlooker rated them on their lack of taste, a mob assembled, the officers alighted and cudgelled the intruder, who was eventually marched off to the police station. Here he gave an explanation. He was Beaumarchais's janitor and in his zeal and admiration for his master had been led to defend him with too great ardour. He was sent home with a caution to moderate his enthusiasm.

The famous M. Suard availed himself of a reception at the Academy, of which he was the principal, to hold forth *ex cathedra* against the "perverse" play which had not the good fortune to please him. Meantime the directors of provincial theatres fought against his

new proposal regarding authors' rights and he drew up a Memorial—another!—to the Minister, the competent authority. . . . The Duc de Villequier, whom Louis XVI had sent to prohibit the performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* in the Hall of the Menus Plaisirs, asked Beaumarchais for a private box, one of the stage boxes with a lattice-work screen instead of an ordinary open box, so that the ladies of his party who wished to accompany him might see without being seen. He trimmed his pen and wrote in his best manner:

"I have no respect, monsieur le Duc, for women who allow themselves to see a play which they consider improper, provided only they see it in secret. I cannot lend myself to such caprices. I have given my piece to the public to amuse and instruct it, and not to afford semi-squeamish persons the pleasure of going to it and thinking well of it in a private box and speaking ill of it in society. The pleasures of vice with the honours of virtue! Such is the prudery of the age.

"My piece is not a work of an equivocal nature; you must admit this or avoid it. I salute you and keep my box."

He made the letter public and read it whenever anyone wished to hear it.

PART III

TWILIGHT

CHAPTER I

"Man? He sinks as he once rose, grovels where he once soared. . . ."

The Marriage of Figaro.

THE Marriage of Figaro continued to hold the bill. It passed its seventieth performance and its success showed no signs of falling off. *The Barber of Seville* was revived once more. As usual it was the moment for Beaumarchais to commit a number of follies. He piled one atop the other. Thus in a new preface he violently attacked Suard and the censor declined to pass it. He appealed as was his wont to the Lieutenant General of Police, showing himself somewhat contemptuous and asking an explanation of the King's reasons. The Archbishop of Paris had, of course, forbidden his flock to see the pernicious play or read his edition of Voltaire's works. Beaumarchais took his revenge by writing a song about him!

Louis XVI had given his assent to the performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* with anything but good grace, and he was irritated by the commotion and scandal to which this unholy comedy was giving rise. Suard, as the champion of good taste and decency, was still defending morals and manners by disparaging the play but he had changed his pulpit and was pouring

forth his malice against Beaumarchais in a pedantic and somnolent sheet, the *Journal de Paris*. Beaumarchais began to reply to him, defending his play and its purpose. Suard, hiding behind the cloak of anonymity, continued to provoke him with his pin pricks, and, on the 6th of March, 1785, Beaumarchais replied publicly in an article in the *Journal de Paris*, in which he employed a somewhat ambiguous metaphorical antithesis: "When I have had to conquer lions and tigers in order to get a comedy acted, do you think that after its success you will reduce me to the level of a Dutch housemaid, hunting every morning the vile insect of the night?"

The sentences were involved, none too intelligible, loosely constructed, but it mattered little for the fact was that Suard was the vile insect of the night and Beaumarchais was contrasting him with lions and tigers. The Comte de Provence, who supported Suard and is said to have had his share in the composition of his articles, persuaded the King, his brother, that the reference to the king of beasts was intended to apply to His Majesty and that he himself was the tiger: "unless," he suggested, "the tiger represents the Queen." Such an interpretation was in the highest degree improbable but the King, incensed at the comparison of himself to a lion and his brother or the Queen to a tiger, stopped the game of whist he was playing when his brother came, took from the table a seven of spades, scribbled a few lines on it, and gave it to an officer:

"Take this at once," he said.

The officer left the presence and read the card:

"To the Lieutenant General of Police: As soon as you receive this you will issue an order for the Sieur de Beaumarchais to be taken to St. Lazare. This man is far too insolent; he has been badly brought up and his education must be corrected."

The officer could not help chuckling: "At St. Lazare. . . . All the same it's pretty stiff!"

It was no longer a turn in fortune's wheel—the wheel had spun full circle. St. Lazare was a house of correction and a section of it was reserved for profligate priests, young thieves and other juvenile offenders. Beaumarchais was a man of fifty-three. The King had inflicted a disgraceful affront on him; it was an iniquity, a shocking act of tyranny.

On the evening of Monday, the 7th of March, Beaumarchais was supping with friends, including the Prince de Nassau and the Abbé de Calonne. About ten o'clock an old Commissary of Police, whom he once knew, called and asked to see him. . . . He returned to say good-bye to his friends and Mlle. Villermawlaz, somewhat apprehensive, though he told them he was called to Versailles on urgent business. The Commissary, when alone with him, wished to put the seals on his house. Beaumarchais implored him for the sake of his business not to take this step, left the house, and took his seat in a carriage with the Commissary and his escort. He imagined that he was being driven to the Bastille and in the reign of Louis XV and Louis XVI

it was almost regarded as an honour to be imprisoned in the Bastille. But the Commissary soon undeceived him.

Then Beaumarchais, in despair, gave way to his grief. The Commissary, assuming a paternal tone, tried to console him and assured him that if he kept quiet he would not be flogged as was the custom and would be let off after five or six days confinement.

As a matter of fact, when the news of his imprisonment became public in Paris, there was at first a universal outburst of laughter. Songs apostrophising him as the "Chevalier of St. Lazare" and caricatures depicting him receiving a whipping from a friar went the rounds. But public opinion soon began to murmur against so despotic an act, whatever motive lay behind it. And on the 13th of March Louis XVI, content with this show of authority once more, uneasy at the reaction in the minds of Parisians, ordered his prisoner to be set at liberty. Beaumarchais, reflecting in St. Lazare over his punishment, grew more and more convinced that he was the innocent victim of an injustice and that the King was deceived and could have no reason for sending him to St. Lazare nor for imprisoning him at all. He was sulking when they came for him, asked and almost insisted on his crime being specified, but at last allowed himself to be taken away by his friend, the Commissary of Police, and Gudin. . . . Meanwhile, Mozart had composed the music for *The Marriage of Figaro.*

Beaumarchais shut himself up and kept to his house.

He devoted himself to *The Guilty Mother*, a sequel to *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. At the same time he addressed a petition to the King, claiming redress for his imprisonment—it was a somewhat rash act—and he had serious thoughts of settling in England. He even sold his horses. He received when necessary a few friends who danced attendance at his door to congratulate him on his release. At the Théâtre Français *The Marriage of Figaro*, which had been withdrawn on the 7th of March, was revived for its seventy-fourth performance on the release of the prisoner. The play was published in volume form with a preface, judicious in tone, which set out above all to prove—no easy task—that it was a school of virtue!

Beaumarchais announced *The Guilty Mother* and declared that he was preparing to "castigate in no uncertain manner vices which he had treated with too much consideration." His edition of Voltaire was making headway at great cost to himself and was entering France with the tacit assistance of the Postmaster General and the ministers, despite the censure of the Clergy and Parliament. The journals were forbidden to make mention of it and copies could only be obtained from Beaumarchais's offices in the Rue des Noyers.

But his business difficulties were increasing. Voltaire's works were a financial failure; only a fourth part of the series had been published and the Council of State issued a decree suppressing them. America was paying nothing! Compensation from the King for war

losses was insufficient. *The Marriage of Figaro* had finished its career. Beaumarchais still confined himself to his house. The American War of Independence had ended two years before and his account had been regulated by an American expert, but in spite of his claims no payment was made.

It is true he received from the King as compensation for *Le Fier Rodrigue* and his lost flotilla nearly fifteen hundred thousand francs in two amounts. But in reality his position was unsound, nothing succeeded, his mental faculties were fast changing and growing old—in particular after Louis XVI's last blow. For ever and for ever the same? . . . No he was not the same. The winds had become contrary and by slow degrees were blowing upon the flame and putting it out. A few sparks gleamed here and there but that was all. . . . While the King endeavoured to make reparation for his injustice by ordering the suppression of the caricatures ridiculing him and commanding a special performance of *The Barber of Seville* at Trianon, inviting him to be present, which was a signal of honour —the parts were filled by great personages of the Court and Marie Antoinette was a charming Rosina—the authorities in Bordeaux refused to allow the actors to play *The Marriage of Figaro*. A host of friends remained faithful to him, of course, but they were as powerless to defend him in public against his detractors as to uphold him against the authorities. The newspapers continued to traduce or ridicule him. One of his firmest supporters, Cardinal Rohan, was under arrest as a

result of the mysterious affair of Marie Antoinette's diamond necklace.

It was at this period that the first of the storms which were to assail him one after the other in his advancing age, broke over him. Mirabeau, already notorious through his divorce proceedings, and even then disgraced by his vices and debts, came out of prison. A hack writer in any one's pay, he began to write for a variety of interests a mass of requisitions, reflections, observations, memorials on America, the Bank of Discount, the Bank of St. Charles. He wrote others on his own account against particular persons. He attacked everybody and everything indiscriminately. Such vigorous and violent invective, coming from that powerful figure, achieved a certain measure of success.

Some little time before Beaumarchais had refused him a loan and he fell with all his might on the affairs of the Water Company of Paris, the shares of which were rising in price to the annoyance of two financiers, Clavière and Panchaud. Mirabeau incidentally loaded Beaumarchais, as shareholder and director, with sarcasms. Beaumarchais, on behalf of the company, attempted to reply as he would have done of old, by making sport of him. In effect, after a couple of hundred pages of closely reasoned discussion of the financial aspect of the subject, he made merry of Mirabeau's *Philippiques* which he called *Mirabelles*. The author of *Mirabelles* launched a crushing rejoinder, cruelly reminding him—in view of his own life he was little

qualified to preach morality—that there was nothing for him now to do but try to deserve oblivion. In an epigraph he quoted a passage from Tacitus:

"A needy, obscure adventurer whose only resource was intrigue, here was this man whose libels had rendered him so formidable, now overwhelmed with public odium. May he serve as an example to those who rising from beggary to affluence and from the bosom of mediocrity succeeding in making themselves feared, bring ruin upon others and end by destroying themselves."[1]

To the general surprise Beaumarchais gave way and made no reply. The incident of St. Lazare lay heavy on his heart. Moreover, Mirabeau was supported by M. de Calonne, the Minister of Finance, who was also well disposed towards him, and he had no wish to alienate a valuable friend, the only one, all told, at Court except Vergennes. Many of his family and friends had passed away. His sisters from Spain, his nephews and nieces were gone. He longed for peace; he had reached an age when a man may well rest from his labours, and he had consumed so much mental and physical energy, especially during the last fifteen years, that his sole ambition now was to bring to a successful issue such affairs as he had in hand without embarking upon any new adventures. That in itself would be an immense labour.

[1] "Egens, ignotus, inquies, dum occultis libellis . . . cuique periculum facessit . . . mox odium apud omnes adeptus, dedit exemplum, quod secuti ex pauperibus divites, ex contemptis metuendi, perniciem aliis ac postremum sibi invenêre."—Tacitus, *Annals* Book I, 74.

To begin with there were his trading interests. He realised that the longer the delay the greater would be the difficulty to recover the 3,500,000 francs from America. He seriously thought of visiting America one day to negotiate the debt in person. Meantime he received from the Royal Treasury 800,000 francs "in full payment of account." It was the final settlement of his claim for compensation for war losses.

His expenditure at Kehl was greater than his receipts. He had spent some time there in 1783 and was preparing to return. The published volumes were accumulating in the booksellers' shops, but the sale was slow and unprofitable. The Water Company of Paris was a success but Mirabeau's campaign against it had brought down the value of the shares by one-half. In short, the outlook for his business was none too good. But what about litigation? For the moment he had no lawsuit on his hands.

As to theatrical matters, *The Two Friends* was revived in 1783 in two performances which were highly gratifying to him. It was the least interesting of his plays but in his opinion "the most carefully constructed." *Eugénie* was also revived on the 27th of November, 1785. He was present at the performance —it was the first time he had left his house since the St. Lazare incident—and he could not help being moved by this play of his youth which recalled the happy days of long ago when he knew nothing of litigation nor prison nor slander nor scandal. He had finished his opera, *Tarare*, but Gluck thought he was now too old

to undertake to set it to music and Beaumarchais confided the score to Salieri, the master's principal pupil. *The Guilty Mother* was also on the stocks. But what a transformation had come over Figaro in it! Figaro was now a virtuous old gentleman with a tendency to spout on the moral law. . . .

At this period Beaumarchais sold his house in the Rue de Condé which he had ceased to occupy for some time. He lived in La Vieille Rue du Temple at the offices of the late firm of Rodrigue Hortalès & Co., now called The Literary and Typographical Society of Kehl, and he bought from the city of Paris a piece of waste land in an unoccupied quarter near the Bastille and the Porte St. Antoine. Here he was having a sumptuous mansion built on a grand scale, too grand in fact. There were statues at the gates and reproductions of various works of art in the entrance, among which stood conspicuously *The Gladiator*, a figure after his own heart. But the house was far from being finished. The garden was elaborately laid out with terraces, groves, temples, a lake, a Chinese bridge and allegorical statues which later on bore on their bases inscriptions either of his own composition or derived from Horace or Racine. The house and grounds became a show place and an attraction to visitors. His passion for making himself talked about was not yet dead.

He took advantage of a respite in his business affairs, a comparatively short respite as we have seen, to regularise his relations with Mlle. Villermawlaz and they were married in St. Paul's Church on the 8th of

March, 1786. She was his third and last wife. A few days later *The Marriage of Figaro* was played for the eighty-first time. It attracted a great audience as usual and the hundredth performance—an unparalleled event in those days—followed in due course.

After his marriage Beaumarchais went to Kehl for a spell. Hardly had he returned to Paris in the mood to put the finishing touches to the rehearsals of *Tarare* when a new storm gathered over him. A virulent pamphlet entitled *Memorial on the Question of Adultery, Seduction and Defamation. By the Sieur Kornmann* was circulated in thousands in Paris. The pamphlet was a surprising feat. Six years after the event Kornmann violently attacked Mme. Kornmann, Daudet de Jossan, Le Noir, the Lieutenant General of Police of that time who had authorised and facilitated her release from the house of detention, the Prince and Princess de Nassau, who had greatly assisted her by their efforts, and finally and above all Beaumarchais, whose intervention was purely incidental and had no personal significance. It was maddening to him to be dragged into such a case.

The position was this: Mme. Kornmann and her husband had tried to make up their differences. She was actuated by the thought of her children and he by his greed for her money. But a household so utterly divided, so completely shattered, is not to be reconciled in this way. Mme. Kornmann renewed her demand for divorce in accordance with Swiss law. The procedure of course was endless and still further

delayed by the bankruptcy of her husband who had plundered the Asylum for the Blind, of which he was the governor. It was at this stage that he was assisted by a briefless advocate named Bergasse, not lacking in ability, but splenetic and hypocritical. Bergasse was an enthusiastic disciple of the magnetic theories of Mesmer.

He possessed an eloquent pen but neither a balanced mind nor a sense of logic. He persuaded Kornmann that here lay a splendid opportunity to create a public outcry by revealing the unknown side of the story, by associating with it, even if there were no real grounds, the ex-Lieutenant General of Police whom Kornmann for some indefinable reason accused of having relations with his wife, the Prince de Nassau, famous for his eccentricity, his capacity for living on his friends and his knight errantry, and in particular the luckless Beaumarchais, the celebrated Beaumarchais, whose star since the incident of St. Lazare and his *Mirabelles* seemed to have waned for ever. A pamphlet concocted with these ingredients, though it ignored the essential facts, could not fail to make a stir. As far as Bergasse was concerned nothing suited him better. He had been grinding out his poisonous potion for some time and in Kornmann's name he placed it before the lovers of scandal.

Bergasse, who knew how to blend with his mixture all the political and social questions of the day, Bergasse who shrieked aloud and revealed his gift of noisy and portentous eloquence, sufficiently brilliant at times,

who attacked unblushingly, almost with frenzy, ministers, judges, persons in high places, Daudet de Jossan, the Prince de Nassau, Le Noir and above all Beaumarchais—Bergasse achieved a notable triumph, winning almost universal approbation and immense popularity. For the rest, now that success was his, he cared as little for the means employed as for the end in view.

For Beaumarchais it meant apparently final ruin, after which nothing would remain for him but to die of shame and mortification, forgotten, penniless, alone, in some remote corner of the world. But he did not look upon it in that light. His reputation was cruelly tarnished in this pamphlet, he was fifty-three years old, he would have asked to see his *Tarare* performed and end his days in peace. But if that were impossible it could not be helped. If needs be he would go down fighting, but he would defend himself. "Wretched man, you sweat crime!" cried Bergasse.

CHAPTER II

"Slander, monsieur? You little know what you despise . . . at first a slight rumour skimming the ground . . ."

The Barber of Seville.

AFTER four nights' labour Beaumarchais produced his reply. It was persuasive and sufficiently convincing. He confined himself to plunging Kornmann into the mire and showing him six and seven years before engaged in a low intrigue. He proved his case by printing the man's letters in which he was seen at work: a letter to his dear friend Daudet de Jossan to whom he confided his wife while he made a short visit to Spa for instance—and other compromising letters. . . . The case was clear enough and these proofs were in themselves sufficient.

Bergasse and Kornmann might well have been confounded, abashed in the eyes of public opinion, by this reply which, keeping strictly within the case, adduced facts and proofs instead of gratuitous statements and insults, and afforded a striking and unexceptionable refutation of the demagogic advocate's envenomed slander. And yet it was not so. Beaumarchais won the case legally, but the public allowed itself to be carried away by Bergasse's frantic outpourings. The public

was in a ferment and it gave its applause to this rancorous southerner's invectives against every social institution and representative of authority. In its blind passion it failed to grasp the case itself, its true inwardness, and it was upon this factor that Bergasse counted, for he himself said: "Anything in the nature of logical reasoning or conclusive proof brings me to a standstill." Throughout the pamphlet, indeed, the main question itself was lost sight of or at any rate indifferently treated and submerged in so highly seasoned a sauce that no taste was left for the substantial part of the dish. Apart from this Memorial Bergasse and Kornmann circulated in six months over two hundred pamphlets of two or three pages each, anonymous of course or signed "Public Parisien," which poured forth on Beaumarchais a stream of ribald and scurrilous vituperation, distorted anecdotes, the story of his life, garbled from beginning to end. It was cruel, insinuating slander which pierced like a stiletto the minds of the least hostile; the terrible slander against which he struggled in vain. Bergasse and Kornmann were brought up in the right school and they had not forgotten *The Barber of Seville* nor Basil's lesson:

"Slander, monsieur? You little know what you despise. I have seen the most reputable men nearly crushed under it. Believe me there is no vulgar malice, no enormity, no absurd story that one cannot get accepted by the idlers of a great city if you set about it the right way, and we have some pretty smart fellows here! . . . At first a slight rumour skimming the

ground like the swallow before the storm, very softly it murmurs and twists and scatters behind it its poisonous shaft. So and so hears it, and softly, softly cleverly whispers it into your ear. The evil is done; it sprouts, crawls, makes its way, and growing in strength is carried from mouth to mouth at a devil of a rate; then suddenly in some indefinable way you see Slander lifting its head, hissing, swelling, growing before your eyes. It rushes forward, extends its flight, swirls round, enfolds, tears, carries everything before it, bursts and thunders and becomes, thank Heaven, a general cry, a public crescendo, a universal chorus of hatred and denunciation. Who the deuce can withstand it?"

Nor were Bergasse and Kornmann the only ones. His enemies were conscious that the gladiator was not in his old form, was beginning to grow old. If he defended himself he would not riposte but confine himself to parrying the blows. They feared him no more, and they proceeded to wreak their vengeance upon him. . . .

He prepared, almost with the care of a lover, the production of *Tarare*, not even allowing the modest Salieri to have any influence over it and making the music subservient to the dialogue. He had the assistance of the Government and the Royal Academy of Music. The management of the Théâtre de l'Opera spared no expense in the scenery and dresses, necessarily considerable in this work of five acts, with a prologue and a fairy show as an epilogue. The Spirit of Fire, Nature and the Shades appeared in it, and the scenes included an Eastern palace, a market place, a Hindu

temple, and the gardens of a seraglio, an illuminated flower garden, "a magnificent drawing room with divans and other Eastern furniture," priests clad in both black and white and choruses.

It was a spectacular show such as were much in vogue at that period, and bound to have a great success and a long run if only the words and music were on a level with the scenic effects. There were some highly effective passages and one fine part, that of *Tarare* the hero, and Salieri's score was considered superior to his *Danaïdes* and *Horaces*. Beaumarchais intended the first performance to be given in the middle of June.

Kornmann's virulent pamphlet appeared on the 12th of May and there was a rush to read it. Scandals of this nature, numerous before the Revolution, greatly excited public opinion, especially when well known personages of good or evil reputation were in question. Thus as much as two louis, equivalent to three hundred francs to-day, were offered for a copy. Kornmann satisfied the demand by issuing a second edition of the work which Bergasse had written for him.

On the 17th of May Beaumarchais addressed a letter to the magistrates, declaring that he would prosecute Kornmann for defamation and was preparing a justificative reply. He requested the suspension of the rehearsals of *Tarare* and the postponement of its first performance until he had successfully defended his honour; "there is little interest in a work when the author is discredited," he said. He gathered together his documents and prepared his reply.

On the 24th of May Kornmann issued four letters, one to the leading personages in Paris, one to the Minister of Justice, one to the Archbishop of Toulouse and one to Baron de Breteuil, the Minister of the King's Household, admitting responsibility for his Memorial though not in express terms and repudiating the edition which was issued, he said, without his knowledge. It was merely a subterfuge to avoid a prosecution. Then came a *Declaration by G. Kornmann*, dated the 20th of May, asserting the truth of the statements in his Memorial; then a counter statement on the 25th of May in which Bergasse avowed himself the author and Kornmann declared that the letters which Beaumarchais had announced his intention of publishing in his own justification were "fictitious or forged." On the 27th Kornmann issued a further statement without a title; it contained another outburst of abuse. Beaumarchais had discharged one of his servants and the man in revenge and for money told Kornmann that he knew a great deal about the relations between Beaumarchais, Le Noir, Daudet de Jossan and Mme. Kornmann six years before and according to his story the three rascals were guilty of illicit relations with Mme. Kornmann turn and turn about. In a postscript Kornmann called upon Beaumarchais to lodge in Court the letters which he proposed to use against him.

On the 30th of May an *Important Addition to my Memorial*, signed by Kornmann, appeared. Thus his tactics were to disconcert Beaumarchais by constant bombardments with poisoned darts, slanders and scur-

rilities big and little, nearly always anonymous, paid for at so much a line, and fired into him one after the other unceasingly.

Beaumarchais's reply was impatiently awaited. At last, on the 1st of June, he mentioned it at the Opera and next day he distributed copies to his friends and it was on sale. The dress rehearsal of *Tarare*, reserved for his friends and acquaintances, took place the same day. A great crowd besieged the doors. On the 6th of June Kornmann announced a refutation of Beaumarchais's Memorial while at the "Caveau," the popular café of the day, a number of persons held a mock trial with judges, advocates, suitors, at which in the end Beaumarchais's Memorial was condemned to be torn up and burned by one of the café waiters.

On Monday the 4th there was another dress rehearsal of *Tarare* before a paying and semi-public audience. The fifth act was hissed. On silence being restored Beaumarchais announced his intention of revising the act. But, fearing a cabal and an attempt on the part of his enemies to damn the play on the opening night, fixed for the 8th of June, he approached Baron de Breteuil, the Minister of the King's Household, and begged him to allow it to be postponed to a later date. The Minister pointed out the considerable prejudice to the actors and the public of such a course even if the former were compensated and the latter received their money back. Beaumarchais failed to see anything but the prejudice to himself, and declared his readiness to make every sacrifice to stop the per-

formance. But the pressure of circumstances was too much for him, and he who had struggled and fought for three years before he was allowed to perform *The Marriage of Figaro* saw perforce his opera *Tarare* acted on the 8th of June against his will.

The house was thronged by a great multitude, including the King's brother, the Comte d'Artois. The prologue was a failure but the play itself was so great a success that the pit shouted for the author, which had never been known before, and he declined to appear, which had never been known before either. He was no longer tempted by uproarious applause. Was he growing wiser with the years?

Next day, of course, pamphlets and epigrams on the play began to circulate. St. Lazare and Tarare made such brilliant rhymes. One writer remarked in his verse that *ratera*—it will fail—was an anagram of *Tarare;* another pretending to defend the play asked, citing Beaumarchais's own words in his last Memorial,

> Did he not say that up to today
> He had made us admire his follies?

The writer, signing himself "Public Parisien," who rumour said might be Mirabeau though more probably it was Suard, "the vile insect of the night," continued to abuse and vilify him at the rate of four or five printed sheets every week—such as *The Public to P.A.C. de Beaumarchais; Postscript of the Same to the Same; Memorial to Confute P.A.C. de Beaumarchais* and so forth. *A Will of Figaro's Father*, too, was issued in the

style of Villon except that the legacies which his enemies ascribed to Beaumarchais were for the most part absolute slanders. He was ridiculed in songs; in a mock offer from a clerk at the Law Courts to write his Memorials at the rate of four sous a page in the "style of a cookery book," in a fictitious *Petition of the Scoundrels of Bicêtre Prison* in which he was claimed as a brother member of their society. There was no end to these attacks.

None the less *Tarare* continued its increasingly prosperous career and Beaumarchais found the moment opportune to publish another twenty-one volumes of his edition of Voltaire. He had by now published forty volumes and he asked himself with misgivings whether he would ever come to the end of them. His money was at stake, of course, and it amounted to not less than one and a half million francs.

That same year, one after the other, Vergennes passed away and Calonne was exiled in Lorraine. As to America, the peace by which England acknowledged the Independence of America and France was to give up her five commercial agencies in India, but retain Senegal, was signed four years before but not a sou of the 3,600,000 francs due to Beaumarchais had been paid. The account had been accepted, payment promised, but nothing was forthcoming. He had never ceased to press his claim during the last six years. Already out of temper over the Kornmann case and disgruntled by the production of *Tarare* against his will four days before though it was an outstanding success,

he wrote, on the 12th of June, 1788, to the President of Congress in a frame of mind of rather legitimate impatience expressing his resentment at the manner in which the United States, now rich and prosperous, had treated him. In the course of the letter he said:

"What do you expect, monsieur, is to be thought here of the vicious circle in which it appears I am to be enclosed? We will not make any payment to M. de Beaumarchais before we have arranged his accounts and we will not arrange his accounts so that we may not have to make to him any payment. . . ."

In previous letters he offered to submit the question to arbitration. He proposed M. de Vergennes as one of the arbitrators leaving America to nominate any one else except his personal enemy, Arthur Lee. Vergennes was now dead. Congress, irritated doubtless by this tenacious creditor, who after seven years of waiting, still persisted in asking for payment of the debt, made answer to Beaumarchais's indignation that it was eager to settle the account definitely and had appointed—Arthur Lee to undertake the job!

It did not take long. . . . Arthur Lee contended that the French Government, on the 10th of June, 1776, had made a gift of one million francs to Beaumarchais for the United Colonies and furthermore that Beaumarchais had appropriated to himself in repayment two cargoes intended for Franklin when he was in France in 1782. Lee declared that so far from having any claim upon the United States Beaumarchais owed the United States 1,800,000 francs!

When he learnt the brilliant result at which the ingenious Arthur Lee had arrived he protested with indignation, again pressed for an impartial arbitration and the immediate payment in full if his claim were accepted. But the American Government turned a deaf ear to him and though he still had it in mind to cross the Atlantic to present his bill in person he had too many irons in the fire to undertake the expedition.

Tarare was still being acted. It had reached its thirty-third performance without a break. The Kornmann litigation was still proceeding and Beaumarchais's new home was still in the builder's hands. He cherished a scheme to throw a bridge over the Seine near his house, a bridge between the Jardin du Roi and the Jardin de l'Arsenal for which there had long been an urgent need. He went so far as to prepare estimates of expenditure and receipts. The cost of erection would be 853,499 francs while tolls on passenger and goods traffic at less than one-half the charge made by the ferry boat at the Invalides would bring in five francs for a carriage with two horses, seven francs with four horses, nine francs with six horses, one franc for a man on horseback, three sous for a foot passenger, one franc six sous for an ox, six sous for a sheep and so forth. . . . The Pont Sully was not built for many a long year after and then there were no tolls. . . .

By this time *The Marriage of Figaro* had brought him over two hundred and fifty thousand francs which was a pretty considerable sum for a play in those days.

Nearly the whole of the amount was devoted to charitable institutions.

As an air of general depression reigned in 1788 at the time of the Convocation of the Notables and the Brienne Ministry and their ingenious makeshifts to fill the empty Treasury, the French comedians desired to revive *The Marriage of Figaro*. But Beaumarchais flatly refused his assent at that period of universal uneasiness and apprehension on grounds of public policy. He finished *The Guilty Mother*, which was a strange play—at least for him to write. It was a melodrama with a moral tendency in which the Almaviva family, Susan and Figaro, reappeared under a new aspect. Beaumarchais declared, and it was a curious claim for him to make, that he had written *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro* only by way of introduction to this play of his old age—in reality a sort of illegitimate successor of *Eugénie* more than any other—and "to make the public cry with the same characters that had made them laugh." He planned another play of the same order under the title of *The Marriage of Léon*.

His principal and most instructive preoccupation during the winter of 1788 was to "watch the coming" of the Revolution. With a feeling of joy he scented the perfume of liberty in the air. He felt that among the good people of Paris there were many Figaros, that they were daily growing in number, and that they shared their prototype's opinions about the privileges of great aristocrats. . . .

At last his edition of Voltaire was complete. For the moment he was a happy man again for he had kept his engagements, notwithstanding the considerable loss they entailed. Some of the subscribers showed at times their impatience to the point of rudeness and when Beaumarchais replied he dealt with them in his own way. To a certain M. H., whose bookseller transmitted a remonstrance of this sort, he replied, sharply finishing: "I don't know H., but from his style I imagine it is the initial for Huron (redskin)." To another grumbler, who signed himself "President of the Foreign Exportations to Rethel Mazarin in Champagne," and showed himself to be a somewhat vulgar person, he wrote:

"You are perhaps the only person, Monsieur le President, who does not know what we made known to the whole of Europe nearly a year ago by means of the foreign journals, the French journals being then closed to us, namely, that all the editions of Voltaire are printed, and in course of delivery. . . .

"You are, perhaps, the only person, monsieur, who is also ignorant that two free lotteries, representing together a gift of two hundred thousand francs, presented by us to our subscribers, were drawn publicly more than three years ago. . . .

"You are, perhaps, the only person who, lastly, does not know that there remain to be delivered to the subscribers of the 12mo, twenty-four volumes and not thirteen. Persons may well be ignorant of these things

at Rethel Mazarin in Champagne . . . but what ought to be known, monsieur, in all places is that before giving lessons in equity to others, one would do well to examine if oneself has no need of a lesson in discretion and politeness; for it is not enough to be the President of the Foreign Exportations to Rethel Mazarin in Champagne, one must be fair above all things. . . .

"But since notwithstanding your *judicious* displeasure you still do me the favour of saying you are my servant, with the most perfect sentiments, permit me, so that I may not be behindhand with you, to assure you that I am, with the most exquisite gratitude for your lessons, Monsieur le President of the Foreign Exportations

"Yours . . . etc. . . .

"Caron de Beaumarchais

"Soldier of the Citizen Guard of Paris."

The letter was dated the 4th of August, 1789, and it was the last in which he signed himself *de* Beaumarchais.

The examination in the Kornmann case was held on the 14th of March and the epilogue in the Grand Chamber of Parliament that he knew so well could not be long delayed. Apart from this, attacks of all kinds continued to distress him. At night time slanderous posters denouncing his supposed misdeeds were plastered on his doors to excite the public against him; during the night, too, two statues by Germain Pilon, standing in his gateway, were smashed. He was

hissed in the precincts of the Law Courts by mobs of young persons, and one night was even assaulted as he was returning home late, but fortunately he was armed and the attack failed.

From the interrogatory it was apparent that he would win his case and Kornmann be nonsuited, at least in so far as his charges were concerned. But the public did not look upon the action in the same light as the tribunal. It had become more critical and censorious and its interest lay in the fight between Beaumarchais, the old combatant, and Bergasse, the new favourite. On principle the crowd ceases to show gratitude to its old time champion when once he has allowed himself to be beaten—and there was the case of Mirabeau! Moreover, however devoid of foundation the rumours might be which charged him with making a corner in grain, they nevertheless left a bad impression. The construction which was still proceeding of his too sumptuous house, its beautiful grounds, the splendour of its decorations, the luxury of its furniture—all these things set opinion against him, embittered as it was by the complexities of the time, over and above the jealousy invariably aroused by persons, however meritorious they may be, who have too suddenly and too rapidly acquired wealth.

Thus when the speeches of the most eloquent advocates in Paris and the deliberations of the judges, almost as long and exciting as those of 1774 in the Goëzman case, were over and it was learnt late on the 2nd of April, 1789, that Kornmann and Bergasse were con-

demned to pay Beaumarchais damages, the news was ill-received. Beaumarchais was greeted with murmurs and the public reserved its noisiest demonstrations of sympathy for Bergasse.

CHAPTER III

"Liberty, beloved liberty. . . ."

The Marseillaise.

THE Revolution was gathering momentum and in April, 1789, the working classes began by firing a few mansions and massacring a few persons. Beaumarchais was not without anxiety for his own house and in any case was in no hurry to live in it. As a measure of precaution he made a gift of twelve thousand francs to the poor of his parish, the St. Marguerite's parish in which it was situated, for he himself was still living in La Vieille Rue du Temple. The St. Antoine district was the headquarters of working class insurrection. It was the building and furniture trades quarter and when the building corporation rises the rest follow suit.

This view was borne out by the events of the 13th and 14th of July. The sixty electoral districts of Paris set up for the election of deputies, delegated the task to their representatives and a municipality was organised at the Town Hall. The people collected and manufactured arms for the "Citizen Guard"; they ransacked the Invalides, seizing thirty thousand muskets and a number of swords. On the 14th they pulled the guns

along. They became masters of their city and they marched on the Bastille, the sombre prison symbolic of despotic power. We all know the result.

The storming of the Bastille and the massacres took place at the very door of Beaumarchais's new house which looked down impassive in all the insolence of its new walls and its two hundred windows. Beaumarchais with his wife and Julie came from La Vieille Rue du Temple and entering by a garden gate watched from behind a curtain the startling spectacle. Next day he was denounced for concealing arms and compelled to flee into the country. He returned at the end of a week and applied to the commissioners at the Town Hall for effective protection. It was doubtless for this reason that on the 24th of July he was imprisoned on the charge of monopolising grain. But the facts are not quite clear.

Beaumarchais watched with joy Bailly and "that excellent young man," Lafayette, rise to positions of eminence. The abolition of privilege and the Declaration of the Rights of Man filled him with enthusiasm. Had he not four years earlier been the first to formulate those splendid principles through the medium of Figaro?

After the days of October and the famine, the winter bore a less cheerful aspect. Beaumarchais was a member of the municipal body called the representation of the Commune but had no wish to go further—Bergasse was elected with enthusiasm to the Constituent Assembly, and was not popular with all his colleagues. Some

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE

From the painting at Versailles

of them even went so far as to deny his right to the sittings. He had rank and was perhaps a profiteer. He possessed two houses but only occupied one and had been nominated by the district in which his empty house stood. After an examination of his credentials he was allowed to sit among the "honourables" for the district of Les Blancs Manteaux, that is to say for the Temple division. Moreover, he requested permission from the representatives of the Faubourg Antoine, which was granted, to superintend the demolition of the Bastille, the work of which, unless great care were taken, would obstruct the sewers close to it or damage the neighbouring houses—including his own.

Meantime Kornmann and his friends persisted in their attacks. Anonymous letters threatened him with death and he was told that he "would not even have the honours of the street lamp." New leaflets and posters denouncing imaginary black deeds were circulated daily and he was compelled to appeal to the Commune to have his house searched since it was alleged on all sides that he was secreting arms and flour. To prove the falsity of these charges he wrote to the representation of the Commune:

"I say that I will pay one thousand écus to any person who can prove that I was expelled from Les Blancs Manteaux district; I say that I will pay one thousand écus to any person who can prove that I resorted to intrigue to obtain my nomination as a representative of St. Marguerite in the Commune; one thousand écus to any person who can prove that I

have any muskets in my possession other than those which I have used for shooting game . . . one thousand écus to any person who can prove that there are any underground passages leading from my house to the Bastille; two thousand écus to any person who can prove that I have had the least connection with any of those who today are known as *aristocrats;* and finally I say that I will give ten thousand écus to any person who can prove that I debased the French nation by my cupidity when I lent my assistance to America. . . . "

Such was the position to which Beaumarchais was reduced, such were the attacks, as absurd as malicious, from which he had to defend himself, and such were the means he employed. His challenge, to be sure, made an impression and at least told in his favour in the eyes of the people who said to themselves: "He would not offer anything at all if he thought there was a possibility of proof, however slight, being brought against him." His defence from this point of view was useful. But in the face of his flashy display of écus people also thought: "All the same it proves that he has the money and is ready to sacrifice fifteen thousand." And at that period to "have the money" was no claim to popular goodwill. Other dangers threatened him the worst of which was blackmail. Furthermore every mendicant, real or assumed, was ready to make a dash for those écus, and if there were popular risings his house would not be spared. His position was full of difficulty.

And yet everything seemed to come out all right and 1790 was heralded under a more hopeful aspect. The Constituent Assembly was in session, the economic position was improving, preparations were being made for the Festival of the Federation. Beaumarchais made ready for it after his own fashion. *Tarare* was to be revived at the Théâtre de l'Opera. It would doubtless be performed on the 14th of July. The honour of it! But times had changed since 1787 and in this work of oriental socialism in which a people, an army, a general, a King were in opposition there were passages which must needs be excluded and others written in their stead. Thus he subjected *Tarare* to a drastic revision. Salieri, returned to Austria, rewrote the music in part so as to follow the alterations in the dialogue. On receiving the revised and corrected score Beaumarchais wrote to him on the 8th of July, 1790:

"Neither you nor any one else, my friend, can imagine the enthusiasm aroused here by the great festival of the 14th. Fifteen thousand workmen employed in building a sloping ground round the Champ de Mars where the ceremony will take place having, by their negligence, given grounds for fear lest their work should not be finished in time, all Paris has marched to the spot where the men were working, from the blue-blooded aristocrat to the charcoalman of our ports, men, women, priests, soldiers—everyone is plying spade and barrow. I am told that the King is to go there to-night with the National Assembly to encourage the work: there are rejoicings, singing, dancing. In no coun-

try has such frantic enthusiasm been seen. On the 14th, four hundred thousand persons will be able comfortably to see the most magnificent spectacle that earth has ever offered to Heaven."

Still further to beautify and preserve its memory from oblivion Beaumarchais conceived a new project, impressive and commercial alike, as was his wont. He submitted his plan to the President of the Constituent Assembly. It took the form of a monument to Liberty at the Champ de Mars:

"In the midst of this immense circle upon a square piece of ground of two hundred and ten feet in extent, I would raise a triumphal column one hundred and forty-eight feet in height, the base of which would be reached by a flight of forty steps one hundred and twenty feet long on each side of the square. At the four corners of the ground there would be four guard houses which united by subterranean galleries might serve during the fêtes for the reserves of the National Guards and contain seven or eight thousand men. . . .

"I estimate the cost of the construction of this Altar to the Country as follows: the construction of the edifice in stone including structure, ironwork, woodwork and earthworks: 2,550,000 francs. . . . To execute the parts specified in the model in marble and bronze: 1,500,000 francs. Total 4,050,000 francs.

"If the Municipality of Paris were to allocate one million and the other eighty-two departments joined together to contribute the remaining three millions each would expend [sic] nearly 36,600 francs. . . ."

Apparently he intended himself to provide the remaining 49,000 francs. Splendid! It was of course a scheme worthy of Paris and himself. Nevertheless it was not favoured. It was possible that had the following year passed in the same atmosphere of peace the erection of such a monument might have been entertained, but Mirabeau was dead, Louis XVI, after his abortive flight, had returned from Varennes, and in July, 1791, fighting broke out at the Champ de Mars!

In spite of the failure of his scheme, Beaumarchais attended the Festival of the Federation in a spirit of enthusiasm, and on the 3rd of August—it was feared that the anticipated nocturnal rejoicings would affect the attendance at the Théâtre de l'Opera on the 14th of July—*Tarare* in its revolutionary form was revived.

The performances were far from resembling those of 1787 when his powerful but peculiar play was witnessed in absorbed surprise if not admiration. On this occasion there was considerable disorder. Beaumarchais revealed himself as a supporter of constitutional monarchy and already that principle—the principle which Mirabeau to the day of his death struggled to bring about—had violent enemies. Moreover, Beaumarchais introduced into the new *Tarare* many of the questions of the day—the marriage of priests, divorce, the abolition of slavery, the right of insurrection and so forth.

Accordingly the play was performed to "an abominable clatter of yells and hisses from a gang of miscreants escaped from the Châtelet prison" or else

"from a corrupt remnant of aristocrats infuriated against anything that could contibute to the good of the State and the people." Such was the opinion expressed to Beaumarchais by a moderate republican.

It was at this period that a curious correspondence took place between Mirabeau, fatigued with the storms of life, and "wishing to think only of my books and garden" and Beaumarchais, growing old but once more giving way to his natural gaiety and signing himself "farmer at the Porte St. Antoine."

Here was the incident. Among the estates that had become national property, that of the monastery of the Order of St. Francesco de Paula at Vincennes—"poor shorn ones"—was ordered to be sold. Beaumarchais heard of it and retaining a pleasant recollection of the place, the old monk, his refreshments, the splendid picture of *The Last Judgment* by Jean Cousin and the great park with its age-old trees, instructed his man of business to attend the sale and buy the property. The only other bidder was Mirabeau who looked upon it as a place that might serve him in the evening of his life as a retreat. Therefore they exchanged polite letters, Mirabeau declining to disoblige Beaumarchais by sending the price up while Beaumarchais, who "had for some time been seeking an opportunity to revenge myself" and was "only too happy to place my enemy between four walls," gave way to Mirabeau, even offering his assistance in acquiring the property, and only asking him to reserve for him the picture *The Last Judgment.* Unfortunately these good intentions had no

COUNT DE MIRABEAU

After the painting at Versailles

sequel. Mirabeau died six months later, worn out by excess and the task of managing Louis XVI and the Constituent Assembly.

At this period, too, Beaumarchais received a somewhat unexpected visit which led to consequences he certainly little suspected when his man handed him a visiting card on which was inscribed: "Amélie Houret, Comtesse de la Marinière" and underneath written in a small handwriting: "the late Mlle. Ninon."

"Hullo, this is curious! I remember this young unknown who wrote me such interesting letters. Well, well, she was then seventeen and must now be twenty-eight. She has got on in the world! . . ."

Beaumarchais was thinking aloud and the old servant was waiting.

"Show her in, Paul."

Soon the aged Paul was making way for a charming young woman. After an exchange of old world bows and Beaumarchais had bent over her hand and kissed it also in the old manner, the Comtesse said, laughingly:

"It's twelve years since I saw you last, M. de Beaumarchais. Are you *for ever and for ever the same* since your visit to Aix?"

"It is something like twelve years, dear madame, or rather dear Comtesse," returned Beaumarchais, and standing before her with an admiring look, he added: "You are just as I imagined you to be from your letters. Everything worked out all right, did it not? Has anything fresh happened? What good wind brings you here? You will, of course, tell your old confessor."

Her pretty face was suddenly suffused with a look of sadness as seated beside Beaumarchais on a soft spacious sofa to which he had led her the Comtesse made answer:

"Yes, a great deal has happened and I have come to my old confessor as to an adviser and advocate to whom I wish to tell everything. I am going to tell you the story generally, and I will leave you this Memorial which, following your example, I have written about it."

She drew from her wrist bag a roll of paper, sealed and tied with ribbons, placed it on Beaumarchais's knee, and began: "When you gave up answering my appeals eleven years ago . . ."

Beaumarchais felt strangely moved at the contact and pressure of that delicate little white hand which lay in his. As he listened and gazed at his fair client, he could not help admiring and trying to grasp the whole picture: her soft glossy hair creeping from underneath her bonnet, her great sparkling black eyes, shaded with long velvety lashes, mysterious and charming, her small, slender, slightly tip-tilted nose, her little greedy kitten-like mouth, her childlike dimples, her melodious voice, her captivating intelligence, her hand so prettily shaped like the foot visible beneath the dress, like the supple figure so easily divined. . . .

She went on, with a far away look in her eyes, eagerly to tell him with disconcerting plainness of speech and effrontery the story of her life as a young girl, then as a young woman, and the last adventure

which would compel her to part from her husband and go to law.

When she finished she stared at her friend Beaumarchais.

"You are so pretty, I am not surprised you haven't had a humdrum life," he said, and after a silence, keeping his eyes fixed on her, he repeated in a whisper: "So pretty!"

With her eyes fixed on his intensely, provocatively, exerting her charm:

"Do you think so!" she asked.

His only answer was to press her hand still clasped in his and to bend over her. She offered him her lips.

It was a long and hard struggle for Beaumarchais. Then he knelt before her and amused himself by taking off her shoes. Laughing, she made no resistance and stroked his sparse hair.

At this moment Gudin, who had come to pay Beaumarchais his daily visit and knocked too discreetly at the door, put his head into the room. He stopped short, instinctively placing his hand over his mouth to stifle an only too natural "Oh!" and stared for a moment with wide open eyes, horrified, at the scene of Beaumarchais with his back to him crouching at the feet of a young woman readjusting her toilette while he was taking off her shoes. He quietly closed the door. Beaumarchais, deaf, had heard nothing, but Amélie Houret had caught sight of Gudin as he withdrew and closed the door.

In a panic she told Beaumarchais who, fuming with

suppressed vexation, put her shoes on and escorted her out, saying in a loud voice in the passage:

"Oh, of course, dear madame, I will read your little Memorial and write to you what I think of it when I return it."

Gudin was pacing up and down the passage and he returned to the study with Beaumarchais who hung his head.

"She is very pretty," said Gudin, "but all the same, my dear old friend, it won't do. You are fifty-eight and you've got a wife and daughter. You mustn't see her again."

Almost submissive, Beaumarchais next day wrote to her:

". . . I have read your Memorial, as strange as you are, astonishing creature. I return it to you though I had an intense longing to take a copy of it. But you entrusted it to my integrity. . . . I send it back to you pure and intact except that I could not resist reading it to four or five friends, suppressing of course names and disguising places. . . . And now, beautiful imperious one, what do you intend to do with me? In the first place I have no wish to see you again. You are an incendiary. Yesterday when I left you it seemed that it had rained fire on me. My poor lips, great heavens, only because I tried to press yours, were burning . . . as if consumed by the heat of a fever. . . . Why should I long to see so many charms? . . . No, no, I do not wish to see you again. I do not wish your breath to set fire to my heart. I am happy,

indifferent, tranquil. What can you offer me? New sensations? I want nothing more of that sort. I have renounced your sex. They are no longer anything to me. . . . No more sittings lip to lip—I should go mad. . . ."

But she answered his letter. Shrewd, witty, vicious also—such judging from her letters in 1779 was to be expected—she wanted to recapture him, to coddle him, amuse herself once more with the old puppet whom in reality she was in love with. And he had waited until the autumn of his life to understand the meaning of a great passion and its mad fever.

Two days later he wrote:

"You ask me for my friendship but it is too late, dear child, for me to grant you so simple a thing. Unhappy woman, I love you and in a manner that surprises myself. I feel that which I have never felt before! Are you then more beautiful, wittier, than all the other women I have seen up to now? . . . You are a wonderful woman and I adore you. . . . I should much like to forget our interview. But how can one gratify a pretty woman without paying homage to her beauty? I only meant to prove to you that one cannot see you with impunity; but this sweet fooling which would be without consequences with an ordinary woman has left profound traces. I should like in my folly to knead my lips to yours for at least a full hour. . . ."

Only that! And so he was recaptured, beyond hope of release. He saw her again of course. . . . Was

he fifty-eight years old or sixteen? Was he Bartholo or Cherubin?

. . . . . .

At last Beaumarchais settled down in his sumptuous house, only too willing to end his days in peace, although this did not prevent him from engaging in numerous undertakings. He was generous in good works and distributed a great deal of money to his country as though in remission of his sin of being a comparatively wealthy man. He submitted a scheme to the National Assembly for the conversion of assignats—in other words for stabilising the currency. He busied himself actively with the permanent regulation of the rights of dramatic authors. With the assistance of La Harpe and Sedaine he drew up an equitable proposal to the National Assembly which suppressed the privileges of the Théâtre Français and the unrestricted methods of the provincial theatres. By a decree of the 15th of January, 1791, authors' rights of property were at last recognised and governed by definite regulations.

It had involved, indeed, a long and laborious process and practically to the end of his days Beaumarchais was engaged in the task of settling harmoniously the relations between playwrights and theatres, particularly theatres in the provinces, some of which protested against what they regarded as tyranny and answered the authors' reproofs by retorting that they cared nothing for authors' rights and their sole preoccupation was to perform plays that brought them in good receipts. The whole of the year of 1791 was spent in

dealing with this question and drafting reports to the National Assembly.

Moreover, Beaumarchais carried on a voluminous correspondence and was greatly interested in the public affairs of his quarter, and even of his old quarter, the faithful in which invited him to demand from the Commune an increased number of masses, a task which he carried out "though the least religious of all." He was constantly receiving requests for money. He gave away with liberality but certain persons whom he refused—in one month he received four hundred and twenty-two applications for money—poured forth their insults on him. And yet his generosity was far reaching and often exercised with delicacy. For instance, he paid the Lady Superior of the Convent de Bon Secours where his daughter was educated double fees—his daughter Eugénie's and that of a poor schoolfellow whom the Lady Superior recommended to his liberality. He also gave the girl the same pocket money as his own daughter. He sent the town of Lyons six thousand francs again in 1790 for the Benevolent Maternal Institution. On the departure of the soldiers from his district he gave twelve thousand francs, and presented beds to the hospital. He still wrote songs and composed a dozen charming verses: *Old Gallic civic round on the return of Eugénie from her convent to the paternal home, dedicated to her mother and strung together by Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, her father, the foremost poet of France, as you enter by the Porte St. Antoine.*

He had his verses printed and spread about. As

the effect of a couplet on the future, taken at its face value, he at once received a host of proposals of marriage from a number of equally deserving young men and prudent fathers concerned for their school-boy sons. And thereupon he was obliged to compose and send out the same letter to each one of these worthy aspirants with one eye on the daughter and the other on her father's fortune, and explain that as Eugénie was only fourteen years of age she was yet far from the time when he would have to consider an establishment for her.

Beaumarchais finished *The Guilty Mother* and arranged for its production by a new theatrical company, which he was subsidising, instead of by the actors of the Théâtre Français with whom a coldness had again arisen. It was the Théâtre du Marais, built close to his house. Here he conducted the rehearsals of his play so far as his growing deafness permitted.

In March, 1792, the country was declared to be in danger. At this stage he received a visit from a Belgian, name Delahaye, who said:

"Look here, I have got hold of the monopoly of the sale of muskets in Brabant and I have over fifty thousand at my disposal. They are deposited in Tervère, a port in Zealand, and held by the first vendor, a Rotterdam man, whom I cannot pay. Therefore as Brabant doesn't want these muskets and I know France does want them, I should like to sell them to her without any trouble to myself, and I propose that you should buy them at the agreed price of thirty

francs each and resell them to your Government which you can easily do at a profit and pay me one-third of this profit for putting such good business in your way."

Beaumarchais made his enquiries and, delighted at the thought of increasing Eugénie's fortune which would then amount to eleven million francs—on paper because he was owed in one way and another over seven million francs—and at the same time of serving the interests of his country, he accepted the offer on the 16th of March, 1792.

He was therefore the owner of 52,345 muskets with bayonets, packed in 922 cases and 27 casks. After numerous interviews with the ministers and the Government departments concerned, he entered into an engagement with De Graves, the Minister of War who had recently succeeded Servan, to sell the guns to France. He undertook to deliver them at the port of Havre on the 15th of May at latest.

At this juncture war broke out between Austria and Prussia and as a consequence Holland was less friendly disposed towards France. The position at once grew complicated, and in spite of the efforts of Beaumarchais's agent to overcome the resistance of the Dutch Government, they refused to allow the muskets to be shipped to France since they might be turned against her or her allies. Beaumarchais began to be seriously alarmed for the French Government had advanced him 500,000 francs in assignats, then worth about one-half of this amount, and he had deposited securities to the value of 750,000 francs, feeling con-

fident that he was doing a brilliant stroke of business. Moreover, De Graves had made way as Minister of War to Lebrun in order to replace Dumouriez, appointed to the command of the army, and Lebrun was a personal friend of Clavier, the ex-financier, now a minister, who had formerly put Mirabeau on Beaumarchais's track.

He haunted Government departments, forced himself upon ministers and strove to secure their assistance and that of the French Minister at The Hague to clear the muskets from the warehouse. His vessels arrived in Holland but waited in vain for the removal of the embargo and the shipment of their cargoes. Beaumarchais persisted in his efforts but made no headway. Ministers in France were succeeding each other every fortnight and the new men knew nothing of the facts. The official papers were mislaid and contradictory instructions issued. In short there was all the disorder inseparable from a revolution.

Beaumarchais was inextricably entangled in the business. Nevertheless success was of the first importance, both in the interests of France and himself. The Dutch Government offered to sell the muskets on his behalf to some other foreign power. He refused to entertain the proposal and they threatened to seize them. With untiring pertinacity he endeavoured to obtain funds, a passport, diplomatic assistance, but commissioners, committees, ministers were at sixes and sevens and a terrible confusion reigned. Citizen Caron Beaumarchais still waited for his country to give him

the chance of serving it, which did not prevent him from offering the National Assembly all monies received by him as author's fees for the duration of the war.

He availed himself of this period of suspense to present on the 6th of June, 1792, *The Guilty Mother* at the Théâtre du Marais. The performance was none too good. The excitement in the public mind was scarcely favourable for this form of entertainment. The public preferred rather more cheerful fare than this moral and tearful drama. Moreover, the acting by this young and untried theatrical company was second rate and *The Guilty Mother* fell entirely flat.

CHAPTER IV

"The fruits of liberty! This wild sapling has great need of being grafted on to wise repressive laws."

BEAUMARCHAIS, *Petition to the Commune.*

A SECOND crisis convulsed the Revolution: that of the 10th of August. After the invasion of the Tuileries and the massacre of the Swiss Guards the Royal Family was removed to the Temple. D'Atilly, the friend of Beaumarchais's boyhood, a lieutenant colonel in the Swiss Guards, was among the slain.

Beaumarchais had sent his women folk to Havre some time before. During the turmoil he persisted in his efforts to obtain possession of his guns. His courage was all the more praiseworthy since he knew that he was a marked man to a horde of old enemies and especially the allies of Kornmann and Bergasse. The mob had first followed its leaders, and the mob and the Commune were absolute masters. The Legislative Assembly was no longer of any great account.

Taking advantage of these troubles in which the dregs of the population, together with political fanatics, indulged in every form of excess, his enemies joined hands with one of these mobs. A conspirator, who in spite of himself had enlisted in the gang, determined to

warn him. He received the man in his study, seated at the inlaid bureau, for which he had paid thirty thousand francs:

"I am here to warn you that certain scoundrels have arranged for a gang of pillagers to come and sack your house during the night of the 9th of August. Six men disguised as National Guards will call upon you, in the municipality's name, to open your doors. They will at once reclose and lock them on the pretext of preventing the mob from entering. They will throw your servants into the cellar and use force to make you hand over the money which they believe you have received from the Treasury. Of course, it is understood between the plotters that anyone giving the secret away will have his throat cut."

The man gave his name and address, placing himself in Beaumarchais's hands. He at once appealed to Pétion, the mayor, for protection. He received no reply. Thursday and Friday went by, the disturbances as well as scenes of pillage continued, but Beaumarchais's house was not molested.

On Saturday, the 12th, another workman came to tell him that the brawling women of the quarter had roused the population and intended to search for "the guns hidden in his underground passage." Such was the story, the result of gossip, lying rumour, and malice.

Beaumarchais threw open his doors and, leaving everything unlocked, firmly waited the onslaught. The yelling crowd, led by wild and excited women, reached the house, brandishing their pikes:

"Death to Caron. . . . Guns. . . . Traitor!"

In a frenzy, with wild tumult they attacked the iron gates, shouting abuse.

Beaumarchais was sixty years old, worn out by the wear and tear of his life; his wife and daughter lived only by and for him. The few friends and servants remaining to him implored him to get away. They took him to a postern gate at the end of the garden, leading to a small quiet street and the house of friends who had recently removed, leaving him the keys. By this time the mob had forced the gates and were rushing in. A soldier on duty saw Beaumarchais making his escape and gave the alarm. Beaumarchais ran as fast as his old limbs would carry him till he was out of breath and the yells of the crowd were lost in the distance.

He reached his friends' door, breathing heavily, pushed it open and collapsed on the grass behind the wall. He could hear patrols of coarse and brutal women searching for him in the street. Meantime the frantic mob, in the presence of his petrified servants, turned everything upside down, searched the house from top to bottom, prodded the bedding, pierced the plaster on the walls, walked through the cellars by the flickering light of candles, and dug up the garden. But the file leaders prevented any theft and the marauders who had slipped among the crowd abandoned any attempt at pillage. Not a glass of wine was taken from the cellars. From time to time there was a shout: "The first man caught stealing anything will be hanged and cut into pieces by us." It was a strange compound of

ferocity, contempt of man made laws and equitable justice, of illegality and scrupulous regard for the rights of property. But were not the same contradictory elements present in the revolutionary army in foreign countries!

For seven hours several thousand persons successively crushed and jostled each other and shook the dust off their feet on to Beaumarchais's floors. At last the surging crowd withdrew, leaving as the tide went out a track of thick greasy mud.

A woman who gathered a flower in the garden was nearly drowned in the lake by these strange champions of justice. A few boys surfeited themselves with unripe fruit but that was all. The crowd even carried their rectitude so far as to leave behind an official report made out in due form recording the fact that nothing suspicious had been discovered in Citizen Caron Beaumarchais's house. He himself returned at four o'clock and went through his property. The damage was comparatively trifling.

Still perturbed by the threat of a nocturnal attack, he preferred to spend the night in his friend's house in the Rue des Trois Pavillons, where he had taken refuge that morning. He had the bed made by the man servant of the house who was staying with him and went off at dusk with this servant. They carefully closed the doors. Beaumarchais retired to bed and fell into a sound sleep after the day's excitement.

About midnight the man came to him in his shirt and woke him up. Daily growing deafer Beaumarchais

could hear no great noise. Nevertheless the street was filled with a wild clamour. Venetian lamps swung on the points of pikes, could be seen above the wall. The man peeped through the shutters. Beaumarchais, also in his shirt, looked through. Some one must have betrayed him. He threw on some clothes and his slippers and considered the position with his "unofficial" servant.

"Obviously they are after me since they have come here. It's impossible to get away. We must surrender or stand a siege. Very well, I'll go to them. It's no use allowing your master's house to be sacked because I'm here. Go and open the door."

It seemed as if his last hour had come. . . .

The man returned to look for some candles.

"I certainly think it's you they're after," he said.

Through the half-open door Beaumarchais caught sight of the pikes with their gleaming points, the "uniforms" made up of odds and ends, the bayonets of the muskets, and the dull lights of the Venetian lamps illuminating the infernal and gesticulating patrol.

Half mad with physical terror, leaning on his stick, he crept to a small recess at the top of the cellar staircase and, hidden by a wardrobe behind the door and covered with a cold perspiration, he huddled up his trembling frame. His teeth chattered, but collecting himself he held his breath. He could see strange ill-defined shapes and hear the tramp of feet.

"The moment has come. . . . They must find me."

Tears flowed from his old eyes. Memories of his past life thronged back swiftly upon him again, that life in which everything had been a cause of scandal, often in spite of himself, but often through his own delinquencies, that life in which he had aroused so much envy and yet had been spurned by so many. He confessed as much to himself in the darkness.

His wife, his daughter, his sister, Gudin, beloved faces, old or young, he saw them all. All those faces that had played a part in his life swept before his distracted mind in a wild saraband, the most remote and the most recent, the highest and the lowest, the dead and the living of the last thirty years mingled together —Goëzman, Maurepas, Le Vallière, Louis XV, the old monk at the monastery, Pauline, Clavigo, the Empress Maria Theresa, the Marquise de La Croix, Marin, Marie—the old cook in the Rue St. Denis, the Duc de Chaulnes, Amélie Houret, his son, La Blache, Lepaute, Pâris Duverney, Mlle. Ménard, his father—and others, many others, and still others, unrecognisable whose grinning faces followed one upon another, evanescent, startling. . . . With closed eyes a convulsive shudder ran through him and he scarcely knew if he were alive or dead. Time, space, life, thought itself were swept away. . . . He slept now, clutching his stick in the forlorn attitude of a dead body propped up against a wall. . . .

Suddenly he was awakened. The man servant and Gudin, his cashier, in the uniform of a national guard stood before him. The crowd had departed; a dozen

national guards remained behind; and the cashier explained that they had come to search the house, denounced as suspect, unaware of Beaumarchais's presence in it. They had discovered nothing; they had left the place and Beaumarchais could not do better than go to bed again. Once again malice and meanness had failed and Beaumarchais preserved his life and property. As a matter of course next day he placarded the place with the result of the visit to his house and the file leaders' official report.

But ten days later Chabot, an unfrocked Capuchin, denounced him from the tribune of the Legislative Assembly as "concealing arms in a very suspicious place." Beaumarchais replied sharply to this Basil of the Revolution, and next day was taken off to prison for one of the coming tumbrils. From all appearance it was the end of things this time.

They came for him one morning. In the presence of the panic-stricken Gudin seals were placed on his house, and Guards with the sinister manner of brigands took him away while others were left behind to "guard" the house in which Gudin, a prey to despair, remained entirely alone. Beaumarchais was examined at the Town Hall. He cleared himself from the charges and the municipal magistrates were about to order his release when Marat appeared on the scene and whispered a few words in their ears. Extremely deaf in spite of his ear trumpet, which caused considerable amusement, he was unable to hear what was said. But Marat's presence was eloquent enough and he soon

grasped the fact that Marat's intervention meant anything but his deliverance. The order for his commitment was signed and he was conducted to the Abbaye Prison behind St. Germain des Près. He was placed in a cell in which there were already twelve unhappy prisoners, near seventeen other cells similarly furnished.

Entirely self-possessed, Beaumarchais, with his bearing of an old soldier and his great affability, helped to give heart to the depressed and spent his days—not one of them knew which would be the last—in discussing literature and philosophy with the Comte d'Affy, an ex-colonel of the Swiss Guards, and his son. He passed a week in this way until the 30th of August. Already the September massacres were being planned for two days later.

It was written in the book of fate that Beaumarchais should experience every sort of emotion. About six o'clock on the evening of the 30th of August a drunken gaoler came to him and said:

"Here, Beaumarchais, you are wanted."

Dismay sent a chill through each one. Prisoners who left the prison like that never returned.

"Who is it?" asked Beaumarchais.

"Citizen Manuel, procurator of the Commune," spluttered the gaoler.

Manuel was a man whom Beaumarchais some time before had wittily ridiculed over the question of taxes alleged to be due but which in fact he had paid. It seemed as if he were done for. He smilingly shook the outstretched hands of his fellow prisoners and, wearing

a tattered coat and a six days growth of beard, calmly followed the gaoler. He had never met Manuel before and when he reached the hall, in which a number of members of the municipality were assembled, he asked for him.

"I have come for you," said a young man, stepping forward and offering his hand. "It has been proved that you were falsely accused and the man who denounced you is under arrest. You are free. I will take you away."

Beaumarchais embraced his fantastic enemy in gratitude for his generosity. Two years later Manuel was guillotined by the Convention and much later Beaumarchais learnt that he owed his release to Amélie Houret, Comtesse de La Marinière, who wielded some influence at that time, particularly with Manuel. At an utter loss as to the meaning of it all and rendered suspicious by his experiences Beaumarchais asked to be taken to Lebrun.

Manuel agreed and explained when they were in the carriage: "Clavière, the financier, you understand has an old grudge against you over the business of the Paris Water Company. Lebrun is his best friend and Clavière realises the advantage to both of them in one way or the other of taking the business away from you, which would enable them to speculate somewhat with it. So they are doing their best secretly to get rid of you and it is possible that this will not be the end of it. I shall keep a lookout but my own power is limited and I may one day lose my post and my head also.

One must be prepared for everything. Here we are at Lebrun's."

In the presence of Manuel and his colleague, who had become his security and his bodyguard, he said to the tricky Lebrun:

"Citizen Minister, in spite of every interference with my house and my liberty and every threat to my life, here I am once more safe and sound in your office. These gentlemen are here to bear witness to my renewed efforts to carry out my mission. I ask you for a definite promise to give me a pass as soon as possible, safeguarding my life and liberty, and money from my deposit when I need it. I ask also for effective assistance if I am in difficulties, and for a plain and prompt answer to my verbal or written questions. There is only one way in which I can avert the deadly suspicions which are crushing me and that is by fulfilling my mission and delivering the guns to France. Grant me what I ask without further delay or shuffling."

Lebrun, as usual, promised him without committing himself and Beaumarchais went away no more reassured as to the morrow than during his incarceration in the Abbaye Prison. In the streets which he walked alone now, tattered and unshaven, he was fortunately unrecognisable. Thieves were despoiling houses and the middle classes were mounting guard almost everywhere while their families were sent to prison and their property sacked. Barricades could be seen on every hand. The gates of the city were closed and guarded and private mansions were chalk-marked, some for burn-

ing, others for pillage and others again for use as prisons.

Beaumarchais went to the Town Hall to meet Manuel again. He appeared before three or four commissions or committees and with the help of his bulky pocket book containing correspondence and official documents, which never left him, he did his utmost to vindicate himself. He obtained from the Vigilance Committee of the Department of Paris and the Committee of Public Safety a certificate stating that "having examined with the most scrupulous care Sieur Beaumarchais's papers, it is clear from this examination that there is no document printed or written which can justify the slightest suspicion against him or bring into doubt his civism. He is in no way guilty of the acts imputed to him, and is not even a suspect. He is entitled to proceed against his accusers before the tribunals."

Beaumarchais left the Town Hall at ten o'clock, worn out with fatigue. Throughout the night he wandered about, for he dared not risk returning to his own house. He would be known and new pitfalls dug for him: "My accusers! the tribunals!" he repeated as he read once more the certificate. "It's very simple, of course. There are swarms of vagabonds hired to denounce me at every turn. Gorsas the journalist, Colmar the shoemaker, Michelin my old porter—all of them are hiding behind Bergasse the deputy, Lebrun the Minister, Clavière the Minister, three persons I can do nothing against any more than I can do any-

thing against their paid tools. As to the tribunals, they don't exist any more. Every case is decided without examination, as soon as possible, at random. I am hardly any wiser than I was yesterday. I must get out of this unfortunate town at dawn if possible."

At two o'clock in the morning in a state of sombre apprehension he crept into his house like a thief, woke up Gudin, who was surprised and moved to see him. He ate and drank, shaved himself, changed his clothes and slipped away again at daybreak.

On the 31st of August he managed to leave Paris in the early morning and betake himself on foot to Versailles, where one of his friends had a lodge. He saw his friend, spent three days with him, and was preparing to extend his visit when he learnt that the massacres in the prisons had begun and that the murderous mob, surprised at missing him, were on the lookout for him. Obviously he would be arrested before long. With nothing on him except his pocket book and a few sous he left his friend at nightfall and plunged without any definite aim into the country side. He walked for long hours and came at last to a farm near Bellevue on the outskirts of the wood.

He asked shelter from some peasants who gave him supper. He slept on straw. Next day as his hosts were taking eggs and fruit to Paris, he seized the opportunity to entrust them with a letter for Lebrun. At the same time he sent word to Gudin, telling him where he was staying. He asked the minister either to make a definite appointment or send to his house such papers

as were necessary to enable him to carry out his mission without danger to himself. Gudin would then forward them to him.

The peasants told him that the massacres in the prisons, in Abbaye Prison principally, had lasted five days and that no person was safe anywhere. Gudin instructed a servant, who travelled during the night, to take a letter to him from Lebrun, making an appointment for that same evening. It reached him too late. Beaumarchais sent back an answer stating that he would call on Lebrun the following evening. The servant warned him of the risk to his life in attempting to cover the nine miles that lay between him and the minister.

"What about you who risked your life in bringing me a letter? I must stake my all."

On the 9th of September, therefore, when the evening was closing in, Beaumarchais set out across woods, ploughed fields, vine plantations, without a great coat, his hands in his pockets. After many a detour and false alarm he reached Paris, wondering when and how he would leave it again.

He did not doubt that his courageous obstinacy would at last get the better of the latent hostility of the two ministers. He was not less sure that snares had been laid for him, that a price had been put on his head, that an attempt would be made quietly to cut his throat in some dark corner. Nevertheless, still with his hands in his pockets, he trudged the principal streets whistling *Ça Ira*, passing patrols whose leaders, re-

assured by his proletarian bearing, shouted a ringing "Good night, Citizen," taking him for a member of the municipality or a commissioner of some sort. And Beaumarchais, his heart throbbing wildly, answered as steadily as he could, "Good night, Citizen."

He arrived at Lebrun's house before the appointed hour, handed a letter to the man in the waiting room and sat down on a bench. After waiting half an hour the man came back and said: "The Citizen Minister asks you to call again at eleven o'clock to-night." Disheartened and depressed, he rose slowly from his seat and went out. To wander about the streets for a couple of hours was to be lost. He looked round for some hiding place, some dark spot in the quarter where he could wait without too great a strain or danger. He discovered a building yard, went inside, and sat down on the ground, leaning against a heap of stones.

"It's a queer life all the same," he murmured.

As he waited the time seemed interminable and he often drew out his watch—the splendid watch made by himself in his father's workshop thirty-five years before, the watch that Pâris Duverney had had set with diamonds, gleaming now under the pale caress of the moon, partly shrouded in mist, the watch that the beautiful Gabrielle Goëzman had locked away in her drawer. . . . Affected and dejected beyond measure, still holding his watch in his hand, squatting among the building stones, he wept in silence. . . . Lulled by the tic tac, worn out by fatigue, weakened by his tears, he dozed off into a sleep. . . . He dreamed of

a cosy hearth, of the soft and tender melody of the harp, of his wife's light and gentle touch on his face, of Eugénie's velvety goodnight kiss, of the old familiar grandfather's clock with its solemn tones looking down upon the idle apprentice. . . .

From a neighbouring church eleven strokes of the clock fell upon his ears. He woke up, rubbed his eyes, saw the time by his watch which still lay in his hand, and refreshed by those few minutes' sleep, hurried off with every precaution to Lebrun's house.

He felt his spirits rise after this dream that called up past joys destined perhaps to return. He was almost sprightly when he came upon the attendant in the waiting room asleep on a chair. He tapped him on the shoulder whereupon the man opened an eye and stammered: "Citizen minister gone to bed. . . . I'm going to do the same. . . . You too. . . . Come back to-morrow."

A feeling of dull resentment seized him. He took pencil and paper, scribbled a few sharp words and made the man take them at once to Lebrun snugly ensconced in his bed. Then he left the house, weary and disgusted, to see this revolution in the cause of liberty, of which he himself had been the first to sound the glad charge in *The Marriage of Figaro* submerged in the blood of innocent victims through the infamous cupidity of profiteers. Raging within himself he noisily descended the stairs: "That will wake you, my fine fellow. And you won't have my skin nor my guns, assassin, thief!"

He found and stepped into a cab and was driven within five minutes of his house. Once more he entered stealthily, like a thief, and once more Gudin in his night attire threw himself into his arms. . . .

But he must needs finish this business of the guns. He appealed direct to the Legislative Assembly for instructions. He was sent before the Military Committee and the Commission of Arms. Equipped with his pocket book and ear trumpet he appeared before them and completely vindicated the purity of his intentions, and at last obtained permission to set out for Holland. The Commissioners gave him a certificate in which they stated that "the Sieur Beaumarchais has shown at various ministers' offices the utmost zeal and desire to procure for the nation the guns detained in Holland, and the undersigned declare that the said Sieur Beaumarchais must be protected in his journey which is undertaken with the motive of serving the public interest and on this account deserves the gratitude of the nation."

This certificate, of course, did not suit Lebrun's book and he saw that his "business" with Clavière would founder. He had, however, to promise Beaumarchais to send the French minister at The Hague instructions and the money due to him under his deposited security and to issue a passport to "Citizen Pierre Augustin Caron Beaumarchais, aged sixty years, full face, brown eyes and eyebrows, well made nose, sparse chestnut hair, large mouth, medium double chin, five feet five inches in height."

With the help of this passport Citizen Beaumarchais set out, assuming that he was about to bring his mission to a successful end, but in reality starting without suspecting it on a fantastic idyll, and arrived with Gudin at Yvetot without obstacle. He did not continue his journey until he had left funds with Gudin who was proceeding as far as Havre, without a passport, to meet Mme. and Mlle. Beaumarchais. He bade farewell to his family and, on the 28th of September, set sail for London where he intended to borrow money from one of his friends while waiting for money from France which belonged to him.

CHAPTER V

"O My Country in tears! O unhappy Frenchmen! What purpose will it have served for you to have overthrown Bastilles if robbers come and dance upon them and slaughter us in their ruins? True friends of liberty, know that its first executioners are license and anarchy . . . your maxims . . . will be established, they will spread more effectively than by war, murder and devastation if it be seen that you are happy through them. . . ."

Six Epochs.

ON the 21st of September the Legislative Assembly gave place to the Convention, and on the 28th, the very day on which Beaumarchais embarked at Havre for London with his many certificates of patriotism in his pocket, the last of which was dated only two weeks before, an over-credulous member of the Convention, Lecointre of Versailles, an honest man deceived by Lebrun's lies and Beaumarchais's enemies, denounced him from the tribune of the Convention as guilty of conspiracy and secret correspondence with Louis XVI. It meant death without appeal if he were arrested.

Meantime, sure of himself, and little dreaming of this catastrophe, he saw his friend, the English merchant, borrowed the money of which he stood in need, and after a stay of twenty-four hours in London left

for Holland. It was a rough and stormy passage. None too well after the sea trip, but still full of hope, he reached Amsterdam on the 7th of October. He found the French chargé d'affaires without instructions of any sort and without money for him. On the other hand he was crossed by the secret agents of Lebrun who "shadowed" and spied on him and obviously would not scruple to lay a snare for him. The struggle was continuing.

He remained in his hotel, wrote to Lebrun and the Military Committee and waited with a heavy heart for an answer and the money which, of course, did not come. On the other hand he received word from Manuel, telling him privately without saying more, to return without a moment's delay to London for letters which it was undesirable to send to Holland lest they should be stopped.

Therefore, after a stay of some six weeks in Holland, during which his business remained at a standstill, Beaumarchais, in the hope that there was some question of secret instructions or new information, crossed with every precaution the North Sea once more. The weather was so tempestuous that it seemed as if the ship would be blown on to the rocks. At last he reached London and found a number of letters from Gudin and Manuel, waiting for him at the office of his friend, the English merchant.

They both informed him of the charges hanging over him. Manuel warned him that a police officer, following the final decision of the Convention, had set

out, on the 28th of November, to arrest him in Holland and bring him bound hand and foot to Paris with directions to let the excited mob massacre him in Lille or elsewhere. They would, of course, avoid any procedure which might lead to unpleasant revelations.

Gudin, moreover, informed him that seals had been put on his house—for the third time. Pluckily resigning himself to the inevitable, determined to save himself and his family if possible, he made ready to return to France as a first answer, the best for the moment, to the charges trumped up against him and to show that he was not afraid to defend himself. He explained the position to his friend the merchant.

"I am quite right, don't you think?" he asked.

"Do as you please, but pay me back my thirty thousand francs," the other grunted, suddenly changing his tone.

"You're joking, my friend. I haven't got them, seeing that thanks to them I have been able to live for over six weeks, pay for couriers and my two trips. I have enough to take me back to France and I will send you the amount I owe you as soon as I can."

"Not at all. I don't know what's going on in France nor how matters stand as far as you are concerned. But you can't leave this country until you have paid me back the thirty thousand francs you owe me. Write to your friends, your banker or your Government to send the money to you—Make the best of it. You must stay here until I have been paid."

"Gad! . . ."

"Yes, I tell you. I'll have you taken to a safe place. You will be well treated with all the consideration due to a man in your position but that's all. Above all, don't bear me any ill-will. I am saving you from death, giving you time to justify yourself, and get into communication with your precious Convention. Moreover, we must all live. I am saving your life. Pay me back my money. I won't ask you for any interest and I don't expect any gratitude."

The luckless Beaumarchais was in the slough of despair, fuming and fretting in his "friend's" office. The merchant rang the bell. . . . And Beaumarchais was taken off to a debtor's prison. . . . He could compare the prison with For l'Evêque—O those happy days long ago when he hastened to laugh at everything lest he should be forced to weep at everything!—and even with St. Lazare. It was quite comfortable, was the English prison for a poor old man of sixty-one who for the last six months had led a frightful life, far from his family, torn with anxiety over their fate and his own, beset day and night by assassins, exposed to every sort of criminal charge, and thrown into prison by far too self-interested persons.

For the first few days he was prostrated. Nevertheless he turned to and wrote for days together. He did not stir from his small table but scribbled away at a great pace in a jaded, rapid handwriting as though breathless. He was fighting; he knew full well the decisive battle, and with the help of the precious documents in his pocket book, which never left him, he set himself

to narrate the long and adventurous story from day to day of the guns.

He had not seen these mysterious guns. Would he ever see a single one of them? Against whom would their first shot be fired? Did the Convention want them in order to turn them against French breasts? Did they know what they were coming to and where they were leading the country, this Convention which at that very moment was sitting in judgment on Louis XVI and sending so many illustrious persons to the guillotine? The guillotine was working without intermission. Three guillotines were operating in Paris, one of which stood at Porte St. Antoine, opposite his house, which he feared he would never enter again. It was to this guillotine that he would doubtless be sent.

A feeling of misery clutched his heart and he gave way to his emotion. Heavy with anguish he pushed aside his writing and with clenched fists paced up and down his cell, into which a ray of the cold December sunlight entered mockingly through the high, narrow, barred window. Next day was Christmas day, the sixteenth birthday of his dear Eugénie.

"My poor child!"

Life in his old age was hard for this courageous being who had laboured for forty years, had done some amount of good around him and deserved the epithet kind-hearted if indeed it has any real meaning. How many unfortunate persons he had rescued from poverty; how many women he had helped in painful situations,

claiming only their friendship in return, whatever may have been said to the contrary; how many suffering creatures had come to him or to whom he had been the bearer of moral or material, financial or legal assistance —not to mention the Americans. . . . He preferred not to think of them. Had they paid him the four million francs they owed him he would be far from that prison nor would he be driven to ask himself how he would pay his "friend" the thirty thousand francs nor how his daughter would live when he was gone. . . .

He returned to his table and proceeded mechanically with the semi-philosophical reflections inspired by his strange lot:

"With gaiety and even good nature I have had innumerable enemies and yet I have never crossed or even taken the path of another person. By dint of reasoning with myself I have discovered the cause of so much hostility. In fact it was bound to be so.

"From the period of my mad youth I have played every musical instrument but I belonged to no body of musicians; the professors of the art detested me.

"I have made a number of mechanical inventions; but I did not belong to any body of craftsmen and they spoke ill of me.

"I composed verses, songs, but who would recognise me as a poet? I was the son of a watchmaker.

"Not caring about the game of loto, I wrote plays for the stage but people said: What is he interfering for? He is not an author for he is engaged in immense and innumerable business enterprises and speculations.

"Unable to meet with any one who would undertake my defence, I printed long Memorials in order to gain actions which had been brought against me, and which may be called atrocious, but people said: You see very well that these are not the sort of thing our advocates produce; he does not bore you to death. Will such a man be allowed to prove without us that he is in the right?

"I have treated with ministers on the subject of great points of reform of which our finances stood in need, but people said: What is he interfering for. This man is not a financier.

"Struggling against the authorities I have raised the art of printing in France by my superb editions of Voltaire, an enterprise regarded as beyond the capacity of a private person; but I was not a printer and they said the devil about me. I built at one and the same time three or four paper factories without being a manufacturer. I had the manufacturers and dealers for my enemies.

"I have traded in the four quarters of the globe; but I was not a regular merchant. I have had forty ships at sea at one time; but I was not a shipowner, and I was slandered in all our seaports.

"A man of war of fifty-two guns, belonging to me, had the honour of fighting in line of battle with those of His Majesty at the taking of Grenada. Notwithstanding the pride of the navy, they gave the cross to the captain of my vessel, and military rewards to my other officers and what I, who was looked on as an

intruder, gained was the loss of my flotilla which this vessel was convoying.

"And yet of all Frenchmen, whoever they may be, I am the one man who did the most for the liberty of America, the begetter of our own liberty; for I was the only person who dared to formulate a plan and commence its execution, in spite of England, Spain and even France; but I did not belong to the class of negotiators, and I was a stranger in the offices of ministers.

"Weary of seeing our houses in uniform rows and our gardens without poetry I built a house which was talked about; but I did not belong to the arts.

"What was I then? I was nothing but myself and myself I have remained, free in the midst of fetters, calm in the greatest dangers, making head against all storms, directing business undertakings with one hand and war with the other; as lazy as an ass and always working; the object of a thousand slanders, but happy in my home, having never belonged to any clique, either literary or political or mystical; having never paid court to anyone and yet spurned by all. . . ."

Content with this literary, political and scientific testament, which contained without doubt a great deal of truth, he went on with his task. He drew up a long Memorial in seven parts. The seventh was never published but he presented Lecointre, his denouncer, with his *Six Epochs, or the story of the most painful nine months in my life*. He had already written a number of letters to his family and friends, explaining his position, entreating them to get together thirty thou-

sand francs and asking them to furnish him with complete information as to the counts in Lecointre's indictment against him.

Lecointre's official statement was sent to him and Philippe Gudin, his cashier, endeavoured to find bit by bit the funds to pay this thirty thousand francs while seven million francs were owed to him, his home worth three million francs was under seals, and the Government had confiscated in addition to securities worth 750,000 francs deposited with them—already of the value in assignats of over seven million francs—all his real and personal estate.

It was no small task to get together thirty thousand francs in these circumstances. At last Gudin succeeded. A few friends of Beaumarchais not yet guillotined, nor emigrated, nor utterly ruined, managed to furnish a portion while Mme. de Beaumarchais and the two Gudins scraped together the remainder.

In short, at the end of February, a month after Louis XVI died on the scaffold, Beaumarchais returned to France. His friend the English merchant, mollified by the payment of his money, agreed even, at Beaumarchais's request, to act as middleman in order to prevent a threatened seizure of the guns. They were transferred to the merchant's name, and he bought them from Beaumarchais on the understanding that he would redeem them two months later. Therefore, neither the governments of England nor Holland, disturbed by the publicity given in the newspapers to the question of the future of these guns, could do anything,

though both were on the point of seizing them, since by a public sale the London merchant had become the owner of them.

It only remained for Beaumarchais to clear himself before the Convention. Afterwards he hoped to obtain possession of the guns and by means of a subterfuge or by introducing other fictitious purchasers to get them finally to their destination. France, moreover, would to a certainty require them inasmuch as the execution of Louis XVI had unloosed the European powers against her.

Provided with his *Six Epochs* Beaumarchais landed at Havre and joined his wife, daughter, and sister who had already addressed several petitions to the Committees, praying them to annul the charges and remove the seals—which they were in the habit of placing on all property on the slightest pretext. The whole family, supported by Gudin, set out for Paris and Beaumarchais returned to his house. He put the finishing touches to his Memorial and had six thousand copies printed. His friend, Bossange, who held the stock of his edition of Voltaire and was himself a publisher, paid for them.

Beaumarchais's confidence in himself was as boundless as it was seventeen years before. He sent out his *Six Epochs* to all the commissioners, all the clubs, all the newspapers. But what is almost past belief if we consider the epoch and the methods, is the lofty manner, resolute at times to the point of vehemence, with which in this Memorial he affronted the revolutionary government and its leaders. He did not appear to realise

that the day was past when he could scout an entire Parliament and be told: "It is not enough for you to be blamed, it is also necessary to be modest." With a freedom of language the bluntness of which comes as a surprise, he boldly called things by their proper names. He declared: "I would defy the devil himself to make a success of any business transaction in this terrible time of disorder called liberty." Calling to mind the farce of his examination before he was sent to the Abbaye prison on the 23rd of August and the intervention of Marat, he did not hesitate to depict him as he had depicted a Marin or a Bertrand d'Airolles: "A little man with black hair, snub nose, a frightful countenance —shall I tell you, O my readers—it was the *great*, the *just*, in a word the *merciful* Marat." And he was not afraid to add: "In this national affair the royalist ministers alone did their duty and every obstacle has come from the people's ministers." From one end to the other of his Memorial he stood up to ministers, throwing the light of day on the ignominious manœuvres of Lebrun and his satellites: "Such are the men who direct our affairs, making the government a shelter for revenge, a cloak for intrigue, a record of follies, a nursery of cupidity."

An amazing man! There was something suspicious in all he set his hand to do and yet not one of the innumerable accusations brought against him since 1770 was proved. He was invariably able to produce evidence from a drawer or from his pocketbook to lay before his detractors, and he did not scruple to belabour

them! It was indeed strange to see this man accused throughout his life of the worst misdeeds never fail utterly to confound his enemies.

Here, too, Beaumarchais valiantly fell upon them, and Lecointre—perhaps really sincere or perhaps merely terrified by the prospect of a turn of the tables which would place him as the accuser in a false position—retracted his evidence, forfeited his word, made an apology and proclaimed Beaumarchais a great citizen. But he had had another narrow escape, had the great citizen! Nor was he yet out of the wood for the Convention had no intention of letting him off so lightly. They insisted on having the guns, they needed them, and after doing and allowing others to do their utmost since they came into power to throw difficulties in his way, they now intended to have them.

He was acquitted in principle and entrusted by the Committee of Public Safety with a fresh mission which was in reality a continuation of his former mission in infinitely different circumstances. Holland and England, as well as Austria and Prussia, had now declared war against France.

It was in these appalling circumstances that the Committee of Public Safety said to Beaumarchais: "We must finish this business. We need guns on every hand, so get hold of yours. We intend to help you this time." This was on the 10th of May.

"Help you this time," was a mere form of words. It meant that they would furnish him with the means, as far as lay in their power, and send him to an enemy

country, in other words to his death. Of course if his life were forfeit or he failed in his mission his family and his property would pay the penalty. It was therefore a matter of urgency to carry off these guns before the outbreak of hostilities or while hostilities were being organised; afterwards it would be an impossible task.

And so Beaumarchais struggled to bring matters to a head. But committees and commissions were at loggerheads, the confusion was indescribable, factions were organising themselves in the Convention, the affair seemed to recede into the background, if anything, and with a sinking heart Beaumarchais saw that he would be sent to Holland when it would no longer be possible to set foot in an enemy country without being shot.

With his usual courage he tried to rouse and spur on these preposterous rulers but without avail. On Sunday evening, the 12th of May, he wrote:

"To the honourable members of the Committee of Public Safety.

"I send you, citizens, the exact estimate of the amount of money which is needed in assignats, changed into a draft on England, to make up 600,000 florins in Dutch money.

"Citizens! In affairs of the first importance I am certain to move quickly and I would do my utmost to move successfully if I were seconded by you. The safety of our country, which is in danger, is at stake. Do not let us lose a moment or we shall be too late. . . ."

He was all the more eager since his friend the English merchant began to lose patience and threatened to sell the guns to the first purchaser as the agreed time for which he was to hold them had elapsed.

After making him wait the entire day the Committee of Public Safety, on the 14th of May, heard him at eleven o'clock in the evening explain his scheme, the essential part of which, as he said, was swift movement. Matters were almost agreed upon but next day he learned that owing to "fresh considerations of prudence" the arrangement made by the Committee the evening before was cancelled. The scheme had fallen to pieces and he must begin all over again.

In his indignation he wrote to them: "Good lord, I can't dance as long as I have fetters on my feet." He never gave up his freedom of speech. For the next four days he hung round the Committee and tried to see Robert Lindet, the President. But he was not received. After waiting until eleven o'clock on the evening of the 18th for the meeting summoned for nine o'clock he scribbled a note to Lindet: "I have the defects of all of you. I am hotheaded like Danton without his brains. I have a temper like Cambon who fires up more than I do. I return home again to-night in despair at not having seen you. . . ."

At last, on the 19th of May, a step forward was made. He received a safe conduct which enabled him to go about his business in France without molestation. He was to leave France again under the false name of Pierre Charron, assisted by two friends one of whom

was Durand whom he first met thirty years earlier in Spain. Durand had returned to France some long time before and was always a sincere friend. An order was signed:

"All passports which Citizen Caron Beaumarchais may consider necessary either for himself or his agents shall be issued by the Committee of Public Safety and every protection for his personal safety shall be accorded him in his business movements. So long as he is compelled to live abroad his property will be under the safeguard of the Republic which is employing him."

He was invested with the title of Commissioner of the Republic. He had scored a good point but he had not yet left France. On the 22nd of May discussion was opened on the financial question but led to no result. Beaumarchais continued to pester the Committee but they paid no further attention to him. On the 25th he wrote:

"Citizen legislators, I leave you once more with sorrow in my heart. This is the 25th of May and nothing has been settled and the business which you so eagerly desire to see carried through remains in suspense. Morning and evening, day and night, I besiege your door as though I were begging an alms or for my life. In the name of public safety of which you are the guardians, let us finish something. The patience of Job or Epictetus would be exhausted in the business in which I am engaged. . . ."

He remained dancing attendance in the lobby for seven hours daily, and his own business interests, which

he hoped to set in order after his six months absence and the seizure of his property, were going to ruin.

France in its entirety was in a terrible state, threatened with investment on every frontier, without money, without arms, without laws, ruled only by violence; "the finest Kingdom after that of the Kingdom of Heaven" was in truth to be pitied, and Beaumarchais, almost heartbroken, did not know what the day would bring forth. At last, on the 28th of May, he received from Perregaux, a friend of his and the banker to the Convention, the sum of 104,000 florins. After this long period of agitation, he was making ready to leave France for the unknown waiting him across the frontier, when he fell ill. He allowed his two friends to go without him, intending to join them as soon as he was well enough. He was suffering from nervous fatigue and mental strain. But three weeks' rest near Orleans and the nursing of his own family restored him to health again, and on the 28th of June, 1793, he set out leaving the management of his affairs in the courageous hands of his wife. He took away with him all the liquid cash he could collect.

And now he entered upon three years which were like a fantastic and disastrous epic, three years spent in futile travel from one country to another, the most miserable and the most uncertain three years of his life.

To begin with he travelled to London and it was only with great difficulty that he was able, by paying a heavy indemnity, to repurchase the guns from the English merchant who had offered them to the Vendeans.

There was no time to lose in settling the affair for he was denounced to the police and requested to leave the country within three days. The guns were still at Tervère watched by an English war ship. He made tracks across Belgium, Holland, Germany following the frontier between Bruges, Nimeguen, Tervère, Namur, Coblence and Bâle. It was to Bâle where he remained for some weeks that the Convention was to send him the agreed funds. He dispatched courier after courier, letter after letter to Paris; he begged and implored and grumbled but all to no purpose. The most appalling news reached him. The upheaval was complete. The men in power were fighting among themselves and France lay prostrate. Municipal committees and national representatives were engaged in a deadly struggle, parties were plotting one against the other in the Convention, Girondins and Montagnards were at daggers drawn—and all around were, violence, massacre chaos. The maddened revolutionaries piled the most monstrous iniquities one atop the other, heads were falling by the hundreds, prisoners were counted by the tens of thousands. It was horrible.

Beaumarchais wandered along the Rhine. He could not even return to France. Once again the Vigilance Committee put seals on his property though Mme. de Beaumarchais had succeeded in having them removed in December, 1793. And now the Committee of General Security placed his name on the list of emigrés. An inventory of his property was taken and it was ordered to be sold. Then on the petition

of Julie, his sister, Eugénie his daughter and Marie Thérèse his wife a statement was issued: "that the Committee of Public Safety having been informed that the department of Paris looks upon the absence of Citizen Beaumarchais as an emigration, declared that the said Citizen Beaumarchais is fulfilling a secret mission and orders that he should not be treated as an emigré . . ." Nevertheless in March, 1794, and again in April Mme. de Beaumarchais had to protest against fresh blunders wilfully made against her husband and his property by certain persons and tolerated or winked at by others.

But it was not the moment for protests. The Revolutionary Tribunal had been set up with Fouquier Tinville at its head and there was no appeal from its sentences; the tax on wealth and the law for the arrest of suspects were voted and the crowning battle between the factions was waging in the Convention. Danton, Desmoulins, Hébert, Mme. Roland, André Chénier, Manuel, La Borde, a friend of thirty years, had followed those who fell in 1793—Marie Antoinette, Bailly, Malesherbes, Goëzman, whom he had known years before. The Duc de Chaulnes too was gone. It was a weird dance of death in which old friends and old enemies were all jumbled up together. His wife and daughter and sister were arrested and imprisoned and waiting their turn to be sent to the scaffold—Eugénie who was seventeen and Julie who was sixty. And Beaumarchais with a pang at his heart, powerless to help them, heard of it all through Gudin

who once more remained alone to guard the house in the Boulevard St. Antoine.

Beaumarchais still continued to wield his pen, striving to obtain instructions. He entreated the Convention to order General Pichegru and his army who were operating in Holland to advance on Tervère and carry off the guns. But the Convention turned a deaf ear to him; his family was kept in prison; his house emptied from top to bottom; his property and papers confiscated. Gudin had already burnt all compromising documents and letters received before the Revolution from persons of noble rank now guillotined or emigrants.

CHAPTER VI

CONFUSION became worse confounded. The madmen who led the Convention were at last thrown down from their pedestal by the clamour of their rivals. Then came the 9th of Thermidor and the great deliverance. The Reign of Terror was over. Beaumarchais's family was released from Port Libre prison. They had lost everything but the clothes they stood up in. Julie settled in the palace in the Boulevard St. Antoine taking the place of Gudin who retired into the provinces. Eugénie and her mother went to live with relatives in Loiret.

The country was still in too terrible a state of anarchy for an attempt to be made to secure anything in the nature of justice. The great work was to repel the invader: the English were bombarding French ports, the Spaniards had occupied Roussillon, the Austrians and Prussians were on the Meuse and Sambre, the Dutch and English were in the North, not to mention the Vendeans and the Bretons in the Loire. Carnot, Jourdan, Pichegru, Bonaparte, Kléber shouldered the task.

Meantime Beaumarchais had definitely lost his guns. He sold them fictitiously to a Consul of the

United States intending to have them sent to England, but England took possession of them as the result of a second denunciation by Lecointre who after the 9th of Thermidor accused Beaumarchais and his two colleagues of being the creatures of Robespierre and his party and robbing the state. It may well be wondered how such gross absurdities could have arisen and how, in particular, the members of the Convention, certainly less reckless than those whom they had sacrificed, could have placed any credence in them without serious examination.

And now behold the luckless Commissioner of the Republic once more denounced, treated as an emigré and subject to the death penalty without trial if he set foot in France. He had lost his guns which England had seized and paid for at a price far below their value. He had lost about 600,000 francs on the transaction, 750,000 francs deposited with the French Government as security, his property in France, while if one day he should return, the Government would claim 1,117,800 francs for the value of the assignats advanced to him. It was maddening. His wife and daughter were living as best they could with a niece near Orleans.

To comply with the laws of the Convention Mme. de Beaumarchais had to divorce her husband when she left prison in order to avoid being made jointly liable with him as an emigré and to escape such measures as would have been taken against her and her daughter. It was therefore under her maiden name of Marie Thérèse Villermawlaz that she petitioned the Conven-

tion time after time, setting forth, in order to facilitate the work of these gentlemen, the facts in this incredible business of the guns with its accumulated mass of inconsistencies. She showed that seals had been placed on her husband's property six times, his house officially inspected three times, his conduct examined four times—after which many certificates of civism and patriotic zeal were given to him—and his name placed on the list of emigrés twice while his case was being investigated again for the fifth time.

The hysterical violence of the Convention had not yet abated and Mme. de Beaumarchais's protests received no serious consideration. Julie remained alone in the deserted palace in the Boulevard St. Antoine which bore on its walls the chalk mark "National Property." In spite of her sixty-one years she accepted her lot with courage and wrote amusing letters to her sister-in-law which give some idea of the cost of living in Paris at that time:

"Morbleu, my child, let us promptly have this decree [the order of removal from the list of emigrés]. Here are the fruits, as they were last year, put into requisition; the cherries being ripe, they are going to gather and sell them to-morrow and the other fruit in due course and then close the garden to the profane and gluttonous. Is it not delightful to occupy this solitary house for six months and to eat none of its fruit except the stones and they will sell even them with the rest. It is for the birds I speak; for as for myself I never thought, considering the price these things sell at, that

there would be much left for us, even though the garden is ours. . . .

"On my honour I believe we shall never get out of this state of things. What times! Here is a pound of veal they bring me for twenty-eight francs and yet it is cheap. It is worth thirty. Rage! Fury! Curses! . . . How happy are those who have gone before me!

"They do not feel the throbbing in my head, the tears that are in my eyes, nor my devouring fever, nor my teeth sharpened to eat twenty-eight francs' worth of veal! . . ."

In another letter she gave Mme. de Beaumarchais who sent her money at long intervals an account of her expenses:

One load of wood	1460 francs
9 lbs. of candles at 100 francs per lb.	900
4 lbs. of sugar at 100 francs per lb.	400
7 lbs. of oil at 100 francs per lb.	700
1½ bushels of potatoes at 200 francs the bushel	300
4 lbs. of bread (for 10 days) at 45 francs per lb.	180

It was a life of penury and yet compared with Beaumarchais's own position was almost luxury. Growing more and more deaf, almost destitute, he lived first in Lubeck and afterwards in Hamburg in a garret; he cut his matches into two for economy's sake; he did not always have enough to eat. But he bore it all with outward resignation though with an inward resentment against the miscreants who were ruining his country,

against the Americans from whom he was claiming the wherewithal to live, against the English who before carrying off his guns and paying a tenth their value for them had sent a secret agent to him with an offer to buy them.

But except in his letters to the United States Congress to whom he addressed vehement reproaches, he omitted any mention of his personal poverty, great as it was at one time. Then he received money from an American friend which enabled him to make shift to live. Many unfortunate emigrés and persons in like case were staying in Hamburg waiting for better days. He soon became friendly with the French colony and endeavoured to obtain from the more well to do among them some assistance for those poorer than himself. He was particularly intimate with Abbé Louis, afterwards Baron Louis, Minister of Finance under the Restoration. He saw a great deal of Talleyrand who like himself was waiting for his name to be removed from the list of emigrés.

To occupy his time he wrote a great deal on a variety of topics to persons whom he more or less knew, signing himself: "Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, commissioned, prescribed, wandering, persecuted but neither a traitor nor an emigré"; he wrote in particular to his daughter whom he had not seen for two years and whose future filled him with anxiety; to ministers, commissioners and members of the Convention reminding them of his existence and asking them to examine his case warning them the while against acts of reckless-

ness, against excess of harshness towards the defeated Vendeans, against a tricky manœuvre on the part of the English in the French colonies or on the high seas. He extolled the resumption of trading on the route to India by the Isthmus of Suez; drew up a scheme for a canal between the Atlantic and Pacific which took shape more than a hundred years later in the Panama Canal; he wrote to his old acquaintances, to the Prince de Ligne, Théveneau de Morande, Gudin living a secluded life in Corréze, to his friend the London merchant; he even took the trouble to console a suitor for Eugénie whom she had refused. And so the time passed, not so hard to bear, while hope revived as he read more favourable news in the newspapers. Things seemed to be settling down and he began to see a little brighter light. Mme. de Beaumarchais's repeated petitions had led to the promise of some definite result.

On the 16th of April, again in May, and then again in June, 1795, some consideration was given to his case. Robert Lindet, the President of the Committee of Public Safety was favourably disposed towards him; but that was not enough. Nevertheless on the 23rd of June the Committee of Public Safety requested their "citizen colleagues of the Committee of Legislation to enter on the first order of the day the erasure of Beaumarchais's name from the list of emigrés seeing that any delay must be injurious to the interests of the Republic"—it was rather late in the day to think of that! He had informed them of the seizure and sale of the guns by the English and it was too late—"and

to those of Beaumarchais who is only waiting for the said erasure to return to France." Some days later the Emigrés Disputed Claims Office of the Department of Paris requested the Committee of Public Safety to send them the documents in the case. But the confusion in the administration, the overlapping in the powers of the Committees was such that any prompt and direct decision was impossible.

Nevertheless Beaumarchais's case was now on the right track. But early in the autumn of 1795 new troubles broke out in Paris. Bonaparte entrusted with the task of protecting the Convention against the royalist party which had marshalled its forces once more since the 9th of Thermidor, sent his "whiff of grapeshot" among them outside St. Roch church on the 5th of October. And the Convention after providing itself with a new constitution dissolved on the 26th. The official papers in Beaumarchais's case had not reached the executive authorities in time.

The Directory was set up. Beaumarchais still living in his garret opened up communication with the council, sending Memorials on a variety of subjects including his own case. After eight months during which his case laboriously mounted the steps leading to the office of the Minister of Justice; after a detailed correspondence between the Minister and Robert Lindet, his predecessor, removed from office, who wrote: "I shall never cease to think and to declare on every occasion that Citizen Beaumarchais is unjustly persecuted, that the ridiculous project of making him pass

for an emigré has only been thought of by blinded, deceived, or evil disposed persons. His capacity, his talents, all his resources might be useful to us. They have wished to injure him but they injure France more." A year earlier Lindet would have been guillotined for saying a tithe of what he wrote here—after an absence of three years spent in misery and despair, Beaumarchais received in Hamburg an official notification of the removal of his name from the list of emigrés and joyfully crossed into France. The passport issued to him in Hamburg described him as "of a full and sanguine habit." Well, he had kept his head, he had survived the Revolution, though his life had been exposed every day, he had suffered on a pallet in an attic and he had returned to France "of a full and sanguine habit." To those who might say to him as Almaviva said to Figaro: "I don't recognise you, you are so big and fat" he might make answer: "What do you expect, my lord, it's the effect of poverty!"

As may be imagined his family received him with wild excitement. There was his daughter, his beloved Eugénie, the graceful young girl "with a good young man who persisted in wishing to marry her when it was thought I possessed nothing"; there was his wife the divorcee who wept in his arms, and his aged sister Julie who laughed breathlessly, dabbing her handkerchief to her wrinkled face; there were his old servants, scattered by the Revolution but now present to welcome him, trembling with joy. And he wondered how he would

put them all up for the house in the Boulevard St. Antoine contained no furniture and was uninhabitable. He would certainly soon have his hands full again.

To begin with, five days after his return, on the 11th of July, he gave his daughter in marriage to "the good young man" André Delarue, an ex-lieutenant under Lafayette. Eugénie was nineteen and André Delarue twenty-eight. Next he improved the occasion by remarrying his wife whom necessity had compelled to divorce him. And then he approached ministers: "I have returned to France. I should like to have my furniture and my papers, and I wouldn't mind having my money as well." His furniture and papers were returned and before long the family, including the newly married couple, were able to move into the house in the Boulevard St. Antoine though it had been defaced and needed considerable repairs and the garden had to be laid out again. As to his money he was told; "No monsieur, the accounts are extremely complicated and it may be that after examination we shall find that you are our debtor."

On his departure from France, Beaumarchais had left behind a legion of debtors and a legion of creditors. His creditors were not long before they began to press their claims but his debtors lay low. . . . His paper mills in Lorraine and his printing office in Baden were in ruins and unworkable . . .

The question of the American debt left unsolved for twenty years went through a new development in 1793 and 1794 but without result as far as payment was

concerned. After Beaumarchais's indignant rejection of Arthur Lee's fantastic account, America for the fourth time entrusted an expert with a fresh examination of the debt and this gentleman restored Beaumarchais to the position of a legitimate creditor for 2,280,000 francs. But nothing was paid though Beaumarchais covered hundreds of pages in letters from Hamburg to the United States Congress.

In 1786 a fresh issue was raised of which he knew nothing until ten years later. The issue in itself caused a postponement irrespective of any question of wilful dilatoriness on the part of America. The Government of Louis XVI had advanced at various times and in different forms eight million francs to America. An agreement in regard to these advances was signed between France and America in 1783, but by an error in the account a figure was entered: "10th of June, 1776, 1,000,000 francs." Three years later the American representative declared to the French Minister of Finance: "The amount we received was eight not nine millions. We know nothing of the million mentioned under the date of the 10th of June, 1776." It was precisely the million advanced secretly to Beaumarchais.

The amount of the French advance to the United States was amended to eight millions but the French Minister refused to communicate to the American representative a copy of the receipt for the "missing" million whereupon the Americans said to Beaumarchais: "We are certain you received a million intended for us. It was given to you to pay over to us. Therefore you

are not entitled to make any claim upon us since the interest for this million covers and more than covers the amount you say we owe you." As a matter of fact Vergennes had himself written to the American Treasury—this too without Beaumarchais's knowledge—declaring that the question of this million had nothing to do with the debt of the United States to Beaumarchais. While Beaumarchais was in Hamburg in 1795 the receipt for the money was shown to the American representative but instead of treating it as a proof, as indeed it was, of an advance from the French Government to Beaumarchais for which Beaumarchais was a debtor, America twisted the natural meaning of the receipt and had recourse to spacious and not entirely honest reasoning. And it was in this formidable struggle with the bad faith of the United States strong in the advantage that distance lent them and of the utter powerlessness of a private individual against them that the last remnants of Beaumarchais's strength were consumed.

Nearer to hand and more accessible but not less difficult to recover was his claim on the French Government. His failure to supply the guns did not do away with the fact that he had deposited 750,000 francs in hard cash and good securities, that he had received assignats to the value of 500,000 francs, that he had paid out on behalf of his country more than this sum in Holland, in preserving the guns and the cost of transporting them, and finally that he had paid for them while only the small sum received from England

for them could reasonably be deducted from the amount that was due to him.

A commission was, of course, appointed and after the long and cautious deliberation which is characteristic of an administrative body, it completed its labours and reported that the State remained a debtor to Beaumarchais in a total sum of 997,875 francs. Beaumarchais would have been satisfied with this decision. But after the coup d'état of the 11th of May, 1798, and the formal bankruptcy of the State, the Directory, considering doubtless that the American agreement was an ingenious one worthy of acceptance, thought fit, in imitation of the United States, to try a fresh commission and for want of American Arthur Lees they appointed French Arthur Lees. And now the unfortunate Beaumarchais learnt with amazement that these new arbitrators had made him pass from a creditor to a debtor to the French Treasury for 500,000 francs.

Here was a man therefore whose fortune at one time was very considerable reduced to insolvency, forced to live on a very small scale, and to fight against the two great Republics of the world—a poor pigmy wrestling with two giants. He could obtain no payment from one or the other and it was only with great difficulty that he escaped being called upon to pay amounts alleged to be due from him. Writing to a friend and discussing his daughter and son-in-law and their first child: "They will have bread but that is all unless America pays her debt to me after twenty years ingratitude."

The weight of the reverse did not prevent him, anxious though he was for the future, from maintaining his natural gaiety, his capacity for enjoyment and his customary activity. He was on friendly terms with the flower of society as of old. He corresponded with the few old friends that remained to him. He continued to assist a number of persons in distress. Mme. Goëzman, a widow and destitute, was only too happy to have recourse to the purse of the "atrocious man" whom she had reviled twenty years before. Another woman too, appeared on the scene again—Amélie Houret. She had lived anyhow since Manuel's death on the scaffold. She told Beaumarchais that Manuel was her lover in 1792 when he came to his rescue in the Abbaye prison, and that he had acted at her instigation and for her sake.

And Beaumarchais—the flesh was weak—bewitched once more by this woman so beautiful, so cynically witty, so ingenuously vicious, Beaumarchais who was sixty-five years old with a wife and daughter whom he adored, Beaumarchais the grandfather who was not conscious of his age and had no wish to feel old made assignations, met her in secret like a young graduate, and wrote her letters of incredible coarseness and vulgarity. She cost him a great deal of money of course. From time to time they quarrelled and sulked for days, and he reproached her for no longer loving him:

"You no longer love me. I am conscious of it in spite of everything you write to me. . . . I do not

LOUIS XVIII

From the painting by Guérin at Versailles

complain. I am too old and too unhappy to be a pleasant companion. The time, Amélie, when I could make myself pleasant is over and the mutual attraction that draws two lovers spontaneously together in a sort of scrupulous devotion . . . is over for us two. . . . I will not come to you and argue about the difference in our way of loving since you only give me your love, as austere as prudish, for the insipid pleasure of trying to prove to me that your love is the more fastidious! . . . Your sad superiority casts a gloom over me and destroys my simple happiness. . . ."

And this amazing passion conquered the old man once more and held him until his last day. Luckily he had other preoccupations that prevented him from seeing too much of her. Connected through his son-in-law with General Mathieu Dumas, he was present at a great luncheon party at which there was an assemblage of some of the most important persons of the day including among others General Moreau, Boissy d'Anglas, Tronçon du Coudray, Kellermann, General Menou, General Dumas, Portalis, Desaix and he declared himself delighted with "this excellent extract from the French Republic." Stoked up with enthusiasm for the successes of Bonaparte in Italy and Egypt, he longed to meet him and wrote to him eulogistically through Desaix. He busied himself actively in the revival of his plays at the Théâtre Français where *The Guilty Mother* was performed and the audience gave him a reception worthy of Voltaire in 1778. He appeared on the stage with the actors receiving an ovation.

He plunged once more into controversial subjects in two pro-Voltairian articles intended as an answer to those who reproached him with sharing the great man's religious unbelief; and he continued to struggle with a number of creditors and recalcitrant debtors. On the file of the report of the second commission appointed by the Directory to enquire into his financial claims he wrote: "My relations with the damned intermediate commission."

He made repeated applications to the responsible minister with a view to the removal of the body of Turenne which was among the skeletons of animals in the Jardin des Plantes, and it was eventually placed in the Church of the Invalides. He corresponded with a number of old friends including Théveneau de Morande, "the poacher made gamekeeper" who had wisely returned to his native town. He discussed the social, economic and philosophic questions of the day with Talleyrand, Baudin des Ardennes, Dupont de Nemours and the ministers; he held forth to Gudin on the good old days but adapted his tone to the new circumstances signing his letters: "Salutation, respect and devotion"; he wrote literary criticism of the works of Collin d'Harleville and Marsolier; and he continued to write songs and political memorials. He even went so far as to request the Directory, in spite of his sixty-six years and his deafness, to send him on a mission to the United States of America, diplomatic relations between France and the United States being somewhat strained in 1798—he would have taken advantage of the oppor-

tunity to present his bill in person! And always ready for a jest he had an inscription engraved on the collar of his little dog: "I am Mademoiselle Folette. Beaumarchais belongs to me. We live on the boulevard."

Quiescit tandem

1799. . . . It is the month of May and the flowers and trees are beginning to blossom. Beaumarchais and his wife stroll about the garden in the evening until the stars come out. Then Mme. de Beaumarchais persuades him to go within doors lest he should take cold. At last they settle down in the drawing room to read the papers and have a little music on the harpsichord as they used to do in the Rue St. Denis sixty years before. . . . The surroundings are richer, the persons more refined but that is all. Nothing is wanting to complete the picture but Julie, who alas! passed away a year before, a devoted sister to the end. But on the other hand there is Eugénie's little daughter, the delight of his eyes. . . .

Bossange, the publisher and bookseller, comes in. Beaumarchais and Bossange are great friends. Bossange puts down his shovel hat, takes his snuff box from his pocket, offers a pinch to Beaumarchais and sits down opposite him while Eugénie fetches the draught board. The men are placed in position and they play three or four games broken by an interchange of their memories of the past. . . .

"It was in seventy-eight," said Bossange.

"No, no, it was in seventy-five, my young friend," returned Beaumarchais, smiling. "I appeal to Gudin."

Gudin agreed with him.

"Upon my soul, Monsieur Beaumarchais, you must be right," said Bossange, shaking his head. "Say what you like, you have a wonderful memory. To think that no one has ever beaten me at draughts until I played with you! Every night I say to myself when I come here: my dear fellow, you must have your revenge to-night. And you always beat me. Whatever you undertake you give the impression of having practised it all your life long. As a watchmaker you invented a new escapement when you were twenty-two. As a musician you were a clever master and as a craftsman you could hold your own with anyone. You tried business and diplomacy and you were a match for the cleverest of them. You wrote for the theatre and your work in every sort of play was above the common run. You were a shipowner and publisher, army contractor to America and France, you gave money to the poor, employment to those who needed it, wit to those who hadn't any, and you made yourself loved by all your friends and adored by all the women who came in touch with you. You are sixty-seven years old and you look younger than I do. You beat me at draughts and you correct me when I go wrong on my dates. You will outlive us all, everyone of us. What a devil of a man you are! . . ."

Beaumarchais laughed. Bossange rose to his feet, picked up his shovel hat, buttoned up closely his short

Jacobin jacket, said good night and went off tapping the pavement with his hooked walking stick. Gudin left the house with him chatting on the way. . . .

Beaumarchais kissed his family good night and went to bed. Next morning, the 18th of May, 1799, he was found dead in bed of an apoplectic stroke. He had passed away in the night without disturbing anyone. He had not suffered but lay in his bed with a calm face, smiling even, as though lulled into a peaceful sleep. The lines in his face had vanished and it had assumed a uniform hue. . . . He was sleeping his last long sleep. . . .

"Man? He sinks as he once rose, grovels where he once soared . . . then disillusion . . . suffering . . . an old and decrepit puppet . . . a frigid mummy . . . a skeleton, a little vile dust and then . . . nothingness . . . nothingness. . . ."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

UNPUBLISHED:

National Archives, Paris: Documents concerning the Goëzman affair (1774). Documents concerning the affair of the guns (1792 et seq.).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris: Documents concerning America (1775–1785).

British Museum: Correspondence of Beaumarchais.

PUBLISHED:

Louis de Loménie: *Beaumarchais et son temps* (1854).

Eug. Lintilhac: *Beaumarchais, sa vie et son œuvre* (thèse) (1887).

P. Bonnefon: *Beaumarchais* (1887).

A. Hallays: *Beaumarchais* (Les Grands Ecrivains Français) (1899).

Paul Huot: *Beaumarchais en Allemagne* (1868).

Anton Bettelheim: *Beaumarchais, eine Biographie* (1886).

Édouard Fournier: *Beaumarchais, œuvres complètes* (1876).

Louis Thomas: *Beaumarchais, lettres de jeunesse* (1754–1775) (1923).

Jules Marsan: *Beaumarchais et les affaires d'Amerique*, (1923).

Gudin de la Brenellerie: *Histoire de Beaumarchais*, Ed. Tourneux (1888).

d'Heylli et Marescot: *Théatre de Beaumarchais.*

Memoirs of the XVIIIth Century.

INDEX

A

Academy of Sciences, the, bears out Beaumarchais's claim to invention of new watch escapement, 19
Actors and authors, financial arrangements between, 267 ff., 293–5, 364
Adelaide, Princess, 29, 31
Aiguillon, Duc d', 110, 119, 142, 163, 167 ff.
Airolles, Bertrand d', 109 ff., 117 ff., 128, 133, 134, 135, 138, 150, 155
Argental, M. d', 148, 149
Ariega, Spanish minister, 53
Arnould, Sophie, 67, 86, 318
Artois, Comte d', 342
d'Atilly, Jean, 4, 26, 370
Authors, Society of, 295, 319

B

Baculard, d'Arnaud, 123, 132, 136
Bailly, 312, 352
Barber of Seville, The, 90–2, 140 ff., 207–13, 216, 265, 266, 304, 305, 323, 328
Bardin, the lawyer, 25, 28
Bastille, the, 304, 325, 352, 353
Beaumarchais, Pierre Augustin Caron de, childhood and family, 3 ff.; learns watchmaking trade, 8, 13; invents improved watch escapement, and defends himself against Lepaute's attempt to steal it, 14 ff.; appointed watchmaker to the King, 19; progress at Court; 20; becomes one of the controllers of the Royal Kitchen, 24, 25; marriage to Mme. Francquet, 26; adopts name of Caron de Beaumarchais, 27; death of his first wife, 27; Controller of the King's Household in the Bureau Dauphin, 28; music master to the Princesses and his musical accomplishments, 28–9; kindles envy of the courtiers, 29 ff.; kills adversary in a duel, 32; another duel, less tragic, 33–4; friendship with Duverney and acquirement of share in army contracts through him, 37–8; attempt to acquire office of Grand Master of Woods and Forests, 38 ff.; buys mansion in Rue de Condé, 41; becomes Councillor Secretary to the King and Lieutenant General of the Chase, 41; love affair with Pauline Le Breton, 43 ff., 58, 62, 64; investments in Santo Domingo, 44–5, 58; visit to Spain, 45 ff.; incident of Don Joseph Clavigo and Beaumarchais's sister Lisette in Madrid, 45–52; complex character of, 48–9; industrial undertakings in Spain, 53 ff., 59; his affair with the Marquise de la Croix, 55 ff.; returns to France, 60; engages in exploitation of the Forest of Chinon, 61; beginning of friendship with the Prince de Conti, 61–2; meeting with Mme. Geneviève Lévêque, 63; beginning of his dramatic work, 65; production of *Eugénie*, 66–7; marriage to Mme. Lévêque, 68; his play *The Two Friends*, 70–1; efforts of the Comte de la Blache to estrange Beaumarchais and Duverney, 75 ff.; death of Duverney, 80; death of his second wife, 81; controversy with de la Blache over settlement of his financial affairs with Duverney's estate, 81 ff.; wins his suit against de la Blache, 88–9; beginning of friendship with Gudin, 90; finishes *The Barber of Seville*, 90–2; quarrel with the Duc de Chaulnes, 92 ff.; arrested and confined in the For l'Evêque, 103–4; de la Blache's appeal in Parliament from the lower court's decision against him, 105 ff.; allowed to leave his prison daily to prosecute his case, 107; the affair of M. Goëgman, judge advocate in the case, 107 ff.; the Maupeou Parliament reverses the decision of the lower court in the la Blache case, 116; his property seized by la Blache, 117; released from For l'Evêque, 119; accused by Goëzman of slander and attempted bribery, 121 ff.; the exam-

Beaumarchais—(*Continued*)
ination of Goëzman's case against him before the Court, 124 ff.; his first Memorial on the case, 130–1; Memorials of his enemies, 132 ff.; Beaumarchais's replies, 133, 135 ff.; revival of *Eugénie*, 139, 149; unsuccessful efforts to produce *The Barber of Seville* in 1774, 140 ff.; his fourth Memorial on the Goëzman case, 143 ff.; intention to take his own life if he should be condemned to the pillory, 151; the judgment of the Court perhaps involves his disgrace and ruin, 155 ff.; friendship of the nobility and offers of influence and support, 158–60; given mission by Sartines to suppress slanders published in England, 161–4; goes to London, 164; returns to Paris and after interview with Louis XV goes back to London, 167; success in suppressing the libels, 167 ff.; death of Louis XV defers his hopes of a reversal of the la Blache and Goëzman verdicts, 174–5; plans and carries out a ruse involving a fictitious libel of the royal family, which he is commissioned to suppress, 176 ff.; his pursuit of the imaginary libeller from Amsterdam to Nuremberg and pretended encounter with him, 185 ff.; goes to Vienna, keeping up the farce, 190 ff.; interview with Maria Theresa, 191–3; arrest of in Vienna, 195; release of, and return to Paris, 198–9; justification of his ruse, 201; successful conclusion of his adventure, 202 ff.; his *Elementary Ideas on the Recall of the Parliament*, 204; the La Blache judgment annulled, 207; production of *The Barber of Seville*, 207–13; again sent to London to suppress libellous publications, 218 ff.; studies English foreign policy, 219–20; his handling of the case of the Chevalier d'Eon, 220 ff., 232, 236 ff., 257; collects information in possible consequences to France of Britain's American colonies, 227–8; efforts for his rehabilitation, 230; report to Louis XVI on American affairs and advocacy of French secret intervention in behalf of the colonies, 233–5; death of his father, 237–8; carries on his rôle as intermediary between France and America, 241 ff.; "Peace or War" Memorial to Louis XVI, 243–6; is made secret agent of France for the furnishing of assistance to America, 248–50; the firm of Rodrigue Hortales & Co., 250–1; his petition before the Grand Council and letter of "relief of time" from Louis XVI, 254–7; sentence of the Maupeou Parliament annulled, 258–9; his business affairs with America, 259 ff., 278–9, 287 ff., 302; efforts to adjust financial arrangements between authors and actors, 267 ff., 293–5, 319, 320, 364; final decision of the La Blache case in favour of Beaumarchais, 272–3, 274 ff.; correspondence with Mlle. Ninon, 281–4; undertakes publication of Voltaire's works, 286–7, 291, 295–6, 302, 309–10, 327, 343, 347; loss of convoy of fourteen vessels bound for America, 288 ff.; his assistance to Mme. Kornmann and its aftermath, 298–302, 333 ff., 348–9, 353; efforts to produce *The Marriage of Figaro*, 303 ff., 311 ff.; finally succeeds in staging it, 315 ff.; offends the King and is confined in St. Lazare for a week, 324–6; inability to collect debt of United States due him, 327–8, 343–5, 414–16; assailed by Mirabeau, 329–31; builds himself a sumptuous mansion, 332; marries Mlle. Villermawlaz, 332–3; first production of *Tarare*, 342; attitude towards the beginnings of the Revolution, and difficulty of his position, 351 ff.; revival of *Tarare* in its revolutionary form, 357–8; Mlle. Ninon again, 359 ff.; generous in good works, 364–5; purchase of 50,000 muskets in Brabant and the ensuing difficulties, 366 ff.; produces *The Guilty Mother*, 369; his house invaded by Revolutionary mob, 370 ff.; denounced in the Legislative Assembly as concealing arms, 376; clears himself of the charge, but is committed to the Abbaye prison, 376–7; released, 378; endeavours to obtain a pass and assistance from Lebrun to enable him to deliver his guns to France, 378 ff.; appeals to the Legislative Assembly and gets permission to set out for Holland, 385; denounced before the Convention for conspiracy, 387; unable to accomplish anything in Holland, 388; in a debtors' prison in London, 390; reflections of, on his strange lot, 392–4; released and returns to France, 395; his Memorial in his defense, 396–8; acquitted by the Convention, 398; England seizes his muskets, 407;

Beaumarchais—(*Continued*)
again denounced before the Convention, 407; in Lubeck and Hamburg, 409–11; permitted to return to France, 413; impoverishment of, 417; Mlle. Ninon (Amélie Houret) still again, 418–19; last days, 419 ff.; death of, 423
Bergasse, the advocate, 334 ff., 349, 350, 352–3, 380
Bernis, Cardinal de, 226
Bibliothêque Nationale, 311
Blache, Comte de la, 75 ff., 105, 110, 115, 117, 135, 136, 137, 144–5, 205, 206, 271, 272–3, 275 ff.
Bonaparte, 406, 412, 419
Bossange, the publisher, 396, 421–2
Bretonne, Restif de la, 287
Brienne, 346
Broglie, Duc de, 221, 224, 225
Buffault, Mme., 63
Byron, Admiral, 289, 290

C

Cailhava, 259, 270
Caillard, M., lawyer, 83, 87, 88, 275
Caisse d'Escompte, the, 265–6
Calonne, M. de, Minister of Finance, 330, 343
Carmichael, William, 287
Caron, André, father of Beaumarchais, 3, 6, 11 ff., 23, 24, 31, 38–9, 45, 56, 58, 64, 100, 119, 156, 199; death of, 237
Caron, Fanchon, sister of Beaumarchais, 4; married to Lépine, the watchmaker, 26, 108 ff., 118, 158
Caron, Julie, sister of Beaumarchais, 4, 58, 62, 119, 129, 199, 216, 352, 406, 408, 409, 421
Caron, Lisette (Marie Louise), sister of Beaumarchais, 3, 6, 45 ff., 119
Caron, Marie Joseph, sister of Beaumarchais and wife of Guilbert, the architect, 4, 6, 47, 48, 58, 89, 119
Caron, Tonton (Mme. Miron), sister of Beaumarchais, 4, 41, 51, 52, 64, 119
Catherine the Great, 164, 286, 296, 305
"Caveau," the café, 131, 341
Châtaigneraie, M. de la, 115, 118
Chaulnes, Duc de, 84, 92 ff., 105, 106
Charles III, King of Spain, 57, 59, 60
Chazal, M., Judge, 124, 125, 126
Chinon, the Forest of, Beaumarchais's participation in exploitation of, 61, 75, 79
Choiseul, Duc de, 53, 59, 167, 292
Clavière, the financier, 329, 378, 380, 385
Clavigo, Dom Joseph, insult to Beaumarchais's sister and the latter's action in the matter, 46 ff., 60
Clugny, M. de, Governor of Santo Domingo, 43, 44
Combault, M. Doé de, 122, 131
Comédie Française, 66, 208, 210, 268
Condorcet, 310
Constituent Assembly, the, 355, 359
Conti, Prince de, 61–2, 86, 128–9, 159, 179, 204, 225, 256
Convention, the French, 387, 391, 396, 398, 399, 405, 406, 407, 408, 412
Conway, Count de, 261
Cour des Comptes, the, 311
Cousin, Jean, 358

D

Datilly, Toinon, 4
Deane, Silas, 247, 248, 253, 254, 262, 287, 302
De la Croix, the Marquise, 55 ff., 59–60
Diderot, 65
Directory, the, 412
Doligny, Mlle., 214, 273
Du Barry, Mme., 67, 142, 148, 162, 174, 175, 203
Dubourg, Dr. Barben, 252, 253, 254, 261
Dubuisson, M., 293, 294
Dufour, Maître, 89, 110
Dumas, Gen. Mathieu, 419
Dumouriez, 368
Durand, merchant, suitor of Lisette Caron, 49, 50, 51, 52
Duras, Duc de, 269
Duverney, Pâris, 21, 22, 26, 37, 38, 39, 50, 61, 62, 75 ff., 114, 207; death of, 80, 85

E

Ecole Militaire, Duverney's, 37–8
Elzevier, 287
d'Eon, Chevalier, 220 ff., 232, 236 ff., 257, 270–1, 272, 273
Escurial, galleries of, 57
Espremesnil, M. d', 307
Esquilace, Spanish minister, 52
d'Estaing, Admiral, 288–90
L'Etat de la France, 26
Etioles, Le Normand d', 36, 37, 61, 65, 208
Eugénie, Beaumarchais's drama, 66–7, 70, 139, 331

F

Faily, Marquis de, 33–4

Falconet, M., lawyer, 113, 124, 128, 156, 157
Fatouville, Noland de, 208
Ferrers, Admiral Lord, 232, 236
Festival of the Federation, 357
Figaro, the character of, 211, 216–18, 332
Florian, Marquis de, 148
For l'Evêque, the, 103, 104
Francquet, M., 24, 25
Francquet, Mme., 20 ff.; marries Beaumarchais, 26; death of, 27
Franklin, Benjamin, 252, 254, 262, 264, 271, 288, 291, 344
Frederick the Great, 164
Fremin, M., Registrar, 124
Fuen, Clara, Marquise de, 54, 55

G

Ganteaume, Admiral, 290
Gardanne, Dr., 128, 150–1
George III, 292
Gerbier, M., 293, 294
Gibbon, the historian, 291
Gluck, 216, 274, 331
Goethe, 149, 179
Goëzman, M., judge advocate in the la Blache case, 107 ff., 120 ff., 124, 132, 135, 136, 138, 143, 155, 204
Goëzman, Mme. Gabrielle, 110 ff., 118 ff., 124 ff., 134, 155, 418
Grasse, Admiral de, 308
Grimaldi, Spanish minister, 53, 56, 60
Grimm, 71
Gudin de la Brenellerie, 90, 94 ff., 105, 106, 111, 128, 153, 157, 159, 172, 173, 231, 233, 236, 237, 255, 273, 276, 277, 279–80, 296, 361, 362, 375, 376, 381, 382, 386, 389, 395, 405, 406, 411, 420, 423
Guerchy, M. de, French Ambassador in London, 220, 221, 226
Guilbert, architect, brother-in-law of Beaumarchais, 4, 6, 7; death of, 89
Guilbert, Mme., *see* Caron, Marie Joseph
Guilty Mother, The, Beaumarchais's, 327, 332, 346, 366, 369, 419
Guines, M. de, French ambassador in London, 236, 246

H

Hauteville, Mme. d', 90
Hortalès, Rodrigue & Co., 251, 288, 291, 332
Hospital, Marquis de l', 226

J

Jarente, Monseigneur de, Archbishop of Orleans, 55, 61
Jeay, Le, bookseller, 109 ff., 118 ff., 133, 155
Jossan, M. Daudet de, 299 ff., 333, 335 ff.

K

Kaunitz, Prince de, 193, 194, 199, 200
Kornmann, Guillaume, Beaumarchais's assistance to his wife and Kornmann's subsequent enmity, 298 ff., 333 ff., 348–9, 353

L

La Borde, 164, 165, 166, 167, 171, 172, 174
Lafayette, 260, 264, 352
La Harpe, 364
Lamballe, Princesse de, 305, 314
Lauraguai's, Comte de, 67, 163, 167, 307, 314
Law, John, 266
Le Breton, Pauline, love affair of, with Beaumarchais, 44 ff., 58, 62, 64, 70
Lebrun, 368, 378 ff., 397
Lecointre, 387, 394, 395, 398, 407
Lee, Arthur, 241, 242–3, 247, 248, 254, 262, 287, 344, 345, 415
Le Fier Rodrigue, Beaumarchais's armed ship, 251, 278, 279, 288 ff., 328
Le Noir, M., 303, 333, 335
Lepaute, the watchmaker, 13 ff.
Lépine, watchmaker, brother-in-law of Beaumarchais, 26, 109 ff.
Lépine, Mme., *see* Caron, Fanchon
Le Tellier, 295, 302
Lévêque, Mme. Geneviève, 63, 64; marriage to Beaumarchais, 68; death of, 81
Ligne, Prince de, 62, 190, 411
Lindet, Robert, President of Committee of Public Safety, 400, 411, 412, 413
Lopes, M., 26, 102
Louis XV, 28, 29, 37, 38, 39, 61, 67, 68, 148, 163, 165 ff., 220, 221, 222, 224; death of, 173–4
Louis XVI, 175 ff., 202, 203, 204, 207, 218, 219, 227, 230, 233 ff., 241, 243, 246, 257, 290, 303, 304, 307, 313, 315, 323 ff., 357, 387, 391, 395, 396

M

Madrid, visit of Beaumarchais to, 47 ff.
Malbeste, M., lawyer, 83, 131

Manuel, Citizen, 377 ff., 388, 418
Marat, 376, 377, 397
Maria Theresa, Empress, 190 ff., 202, 203
Marie Antoinette, 142, 191, 192, 200, 303, 304, 315, 328, 329
Marin, M., 66, 113, 123, 133, 134, 135, 137–8, 139, 140, 141, 146–7, 150, 204, 276
Marriage of Figaro, The, 216, 273, 303 ff., 311 ff., 323, 326, 328, 333, 345, 346
Maupeou, Chancellor, 107, 110, 132, 149, 204
Maurepas, 203, 204, 227, 230, 247, 255, 256, 257, 280, 286, 301, 304, 305, 307, 311
Ménard, Mlle., 84, 92 ff., 105, 106, 208
Mercy, M. de, Austrian ambassador at Paris, 203
Mézieu, M. de, 37, 75, 84 ff.
Mirabeau, 312, 329, 330, 331, 342, 349, 357, 358, 359
Miromesnil, Minister of Justice, 206, 256, 313
Miron, Octave de, brother-in-law of Beaumarchais, 52, 64, 128
Molière, 89, 92
Mommet, M., solicitor, 82, 83
Monaco, Prince de, 151
Montbarey, Prince de, 299
Mozart, 326

N

Nassau, Prince de, 286, 296, 297, 302, 325, 333, 334, 335
Necker, 307
Neny, Baron de, 190
Nicolai, M. de, 145, 146, 154, 162
Ninon, Mlle. (Amélie Houret), 281–4, 359 ff., 418–19
Nivernois, Duc de, 65, 292
Noailles, Duc de, 61
Normand, M. le, *see* Etioles, d'
Nuremberg, Beaumarchais at, 186–7

O

Orleans, Duc de, 61
Ossun, M. d', French ambassador to Spain, 46, 56

P

Palissot, 70
Panckoucke, the bookseller, 286, 287
Parliament, the Maupeou, 116, 121, 132, 149, 154, 205, 247, 258, 259, 279
Parliament, re-establishment of the old, 204
Périer, the engineer, 46, 51, 52
Périers, the, 285, 307, 318
Pichegru, 405
Pini, Italian adventurer at the Court of Spain, 57, 59, 60
Pompadour, Mme. de, 20, 37, 61
Poniatowski, Comte de, 226
Praslin, Duc de, 292
Provence, the Comte, afterwards Louis XVIII, 313, 324
Pulaski, 260, 264

R

Revolution, the French, 351–2, 370, 406
Richelieu, Duc de, 267
Robespierre, 407
Rochford, Lord, 56, 171, 173, 180, 218, 219, 228, 229
Rohan, Cardinal, 328
Rouerie, Marquis de la, 260
Rousseau, 149, 283, 296

S

Sablières, M. de, 34–6
St. Florentin, Comte de, 18, 19, 102
St. Lazare, prison of, 325
Salieri, 332, 355
Santerre, Lourdet de, 26
Santo Domingo, Beaumarchais's investments in, 44–5
Sartines, M. de, 101, 103, 106, 116, 121, 140 ff., 159, 161 ff., 172, 175–6, 179, 180, 181, 183, 198, 199, 200, 203, 222, 227, 233, 263, 303
Sedaine, 208, 270, 364
Séguier, Advocate General, 258
Séguirand, Chevalier de, 62, 64
Seilern, Comte de, 191, 192, 194, 195, 197
Spain participates in assistance to American colonies against Great Britain, 251
Steuben, Baron, 261, 264
Stormont, Lord, 245, 261, 265
Suard, 294, 313–14, 319, 323–4, 342

T

Tacitus, 330
Talleyrand, 410, 420
Tarare, Beaumarchais's opera, 274, 331, 341, 342, 343, 345, 355, 357
Tessé, Mme. de, 61
Théâtre de la Opéra, 355, 357
Théâtre du Marais, 366, 369

Théâtre Français, 66, 139, 140, 216, 267, 303, 305, 315, 364
Theatrical Legislative Bureau, the, 269–70, 293, 294
Théveneau de Francy, 260, 263, 264, 287, 308, 309
Théveneau de Morande, 162, 163, 167 ff., 173, 174, 260, 279, 411, 420
Turenne, 420
Turpin, Comte de, 99
Two Friends, The, Beaumarchais's play, 70–1, 331

U

United States, Beaumarchais's rôle of intermediary between France and the colonies prior to the Revolution, 233 ff., 239, 241 ff.; Beaumarchais made secret agent for the furnishing of assistance to the colonies, 248–50; his dealings with, 251 ff., 259 ff., 278–9, 287 ff., 302, 310, 328, 331, 343–5, 414–16

V

Vallière, Duc de la, 42, 67, 68
Vergennes, 203, 225, 227, 232, 235, 236, 240, 241, 242, 243, 246, 247, 252, 253, 259, 261, 262, 263, 270, 292, 293, 308, 343, 344, 416
Victoire, Princess, 28
Villeneuve, Pichon de, cousin of Beaumarchais, 45, 58
Villermawlaz, Marie Thérèse, Beaumarchais's mistress, 214–16, 271, 283, 308; becomes his wife, 332
Voltaire, 38, 148, 209, 213, 272, 286, 291, 295–6, 302, 309, 310, 323, 327, 343, 347
Vrillière, Duc de la, 102, 103, 105 ff., 118, 121, 141, 142

W

Washington, George, 260
Water Company of Paris, the, 329, 331, 378
Wilkes, John, 229, 236, 241

RENTANO'S
ellers & Stationers

T4-APT-491